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LINCOLN HOSPITAL MAKES STRIDES TOWARDS SAFER PATIENT CARE

Use of State-of-the-art Technology Improves Patient Identification and Safety in Medical Processes

Lincoln Medical and Mental Health Center announced the implementation of “**Colors of Safety**”-- a patient safety initiative that uses color-coded clasps on patients’ wristbands to readily identify certain high alert medical conditions and help prevent medical errors, allergic reactions and falls. The program, intended to enhance patient safety in health care settings, has been successfully in use at Lincoln Hospital for over two months, improving both safety and patient satisfaction.

The project is adopted from the “*Colors of Safety Across the Continuum of Care*” initiative, spearheaded by the Greater New York Hospital Association (GNYHA) which defines three alert conditions by the following standardized colors: **Purple** is the standard color for Do Not Resuscitate (DNR), **Red** denotes allergies and **Yellow** alerts to patients who have been identified as fall risks. The three colors are part of a nation-wide effort to standardize colored risk identifiers to protect patients across all hospital settings. Many hospitals use different ways to classify patients’ conditions, such as color coded charts, stickers, binders and even signs above patients’ beds. In many instances, the significance of color codes differs from hospital to hospital and even within the same hospital.

The use of standardized colors has increased not only patient safety but also patient satisfaction. Luis Rodriguez, a patient whose medical condition restricts him to walking with a cane, wears a wristband with a yellow clasp. “If I have to be in a hospital depending on a cane to get out of this bed, I want all medical staff to know I need help moving around,” he said. “They should have done this a long time ago.”

“I think it’s very beneficial because her condition is fragile”, said Michael Whaley, referring to the yellow clasp alert for fall risk which was fastened to his grandmother’s wrist band. “It makes it easier for doctors, nurses and other (health care staff) to be immediately aware of a patient’s situation whatever the condition may be.”

“In the course of implementing the Colors of Safety initiative, we also improved our patient identification wristband by adding bar coding technology,” said Dr. Abdul Mondul, Lincoln Hospital’s Patient Safety Officer and Chief of Palliative Care. “This state-of-the-art technology improves patient identification and safety in medical processes.”

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Bar Coding Technology: Enhancing Accuracy

Employing bar code technology in the process of patient identification, medication administration and point of care testing is a rising trend in healthcare organizations. This state-of-the-art tool will bring a new level of patient care and safety, directly to the bedside. With a simple scan of a patient's ID tag and medication container, clinicians will be able to ensure the correct identification of patients, the proper dispensing of medications and transfer the information to the electronic medical record. Improving the accuracy of patient identification tops the Joint Commission's National Patient Safety Goals.

Lincoln Hospital's Colors of Safety and bar coding initiative is consistent with the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation's multi-year campaign to increase patient safety. HHC has set aggressive, measurable goals to decrease preventable events that cause patient harm, such as falls, hospital-acquired infection, untreated early stage cardiac failure and medication errors. The public hospital system has set an ambitious goal to become one of the safest healthcare systems in the nation by the year 2010.

"This risk-reduction undertaking is an important opportunity to improve patient safety and share best practices", said José R. Sanchez, Lincoln Hospital Executive Director and Network Sr. Vice President. "Electronic medical record technology and patient safety go hand in hand. With the colors of safety and bar coding technology, we are advancing towards safer medical care through clear and pertinent clinical documentation."

Lincoln Medical and Mental Health Center, a 342-bed full-service acute care hospital, is a leader in health care, renowned for trauma medicine, its Centers of Excellence and leading edge technology. An array of specialty services is provided in a safe, patient-centered, state-of-the-art environment.

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