Blood sample labelling solution saves staff hundreds of hours per year at large NHS Trust

It goes without saying that it is critical for patient samples in hospital environments to be accurately labelled. But, if the process used is inefficient, it can easily create a large admin burden for clinical staff, using up valuable time that could otherwise be spent on patient care.

That's why, in 2019, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust decided to implement a new labelling system that would integrate seamlessly with the Trust's Altera Sunrise electronic patient record (EPR) system.

More efficient, more robust

The Trust manages two major hospitals in Kent, serving tens of thousands of patients every year. Before the installation of Sunrise EPR, whenever a patient blood sample was taken, the clinician would write the name on a pre-labelled bottle by hand so that it could be identified by the lab and the result logged in the EPR system.

While it doesn't take long to write a name on an individual label, the cumulative time taken across the large number of samples every day was significant.

In addition, reliance on interpreting handwriting and members of staff manually entering patient details meant the system was not as robust as it could be.

As part of a wider transition towards digital patient records, the Trust wanted to implement an integrated digital labelling system that would allow labels to be created with the touch of a button, and for these to be read by a scanner, creating a more efficient and reliable workflow.

Just what the doctor ordered

To make the upgrade possible, the Trust needed to choose a label printer

that could integrate seamlessly with Altera Sunrise, and also provide the right combination of sturdy build, quality and portability that would allow it to be deployed in a wide range of settings across the hospitals.

After considering the options, the Trust opted for the Brother TD-2130N network label printer, investing in a fleet of 170 units. This was also due to the printer being module-based and the Trust's requirements to use the printer via Wi-Fi.

The machines offer a combination of high print speeds and advanced networking capabilities that allow a one-click workflow for staff, automatically sending data to the nearest unit or any given workstation. The labels are both human and machine-readable, which means they are easy for staff to identify, but also feature QR codes that can be scanned, in order to automatically file results in the right location.

The printers also feature durable construction, a compact footprint, and the option to operate either by mains or battery power, making them easy to deploy in even the busiest clinical environments.

Overview

The challenge

- To digitise the labelling system used to identify blood samples at two large NHS hospitals

The solution

- A fleet of 170 Brother TD-2130N network label printers, integrated with the Trust's Altera Sunrise digital patient records system

The results

- Hundreds of hours of staff time saved

- A robust, error-free workflow thanks to one-click label printing and digital scanning

Hundreds of hours saved

By removing the need for handwritten labels and re-entering the information at the lab, the label printing system, alongside the use of Altera Sunrise has significantly reduced the time taken to process each sample.

From the printers going live in June 2021 to June 2022, they were used to label more than 1.5 million patient samples. As a result, the highly efficient solution has freed up many hours of staff time.

Jason Juxon-Roberts, EPR project manager at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, said:

"One of the most significant benefits has been for our phlebotomists who take patients' blood samples, both in outpatients and on the wards. They told us that for some patients they might need to handwrite labels for up to 20 bottles per patient. Imagine the time that would take as they took samples from each patient. Now samples can be collected on wards and delivered to our labs far more efficiently, meaning the turnaround for patients receiving results will be quicker too."

Product focus

Brother TD-2130N network printer

- Compact machine with the speed, features and capacity of a desktop printer

- Prints professional quality custom labels or receipts at 300dpi

- Optional accessories include touch panel display, rechargeable battery, and Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connectivity

- Print speed of up to six inches per second.

To find out more about Brother's labelling solutions visit:
www.brother.co.uk/business-solutions