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New technology could save lives

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Patients at Lake City Medical Centers are benefiting from a new medical records program that greatly increases their safety.

The electronic Medication Administration Record (eMAR) & Bar Coding System is a program in which each nurse is equipped with a wireless laptop computer that allows them to access patient information with a simple click.

It adapts HCA Healthcare's Clinical Patient Care Software (CPCS) for use at a patient's bedside through the wireless computer network, laptop computers and scanners.

Upon admission, patients receive a bar-coded armband that will be scanned any time medication is administered.

By scanning one of two bar codes on a patient's armband, the computer program pulls up the patient's medical history, drug history, allergies, prescriptions and any side effects.

Each dosage of medication is bar-coded before leaving the hospital pharmacy.

The medications are stored in locked compartments on the nurse's cart.

Nurses must scan the medication they would like to administer to the patient.

The system checks orders against the patient's drug history.

If there is a conflict, a warning appears asking the nurse to double-check the medication, verify the medication or to call the doctor.

Kathy Dice, nursing informatics coordinator, has been working on the project for about a year.

"We started introducing the program in January, but were fully live in March," she said.

The hospital is equipped with approximately 25 computers for its nurses.

The program virtually eliminates misdoses and incorrect medication and can double-check patients' identities with the bar code scanners.

"Our company, HCA Healthcare, has spent millions to implement this program in its hospitals," Dice said. "Without them, a hospital of our size would not have this program."

Lake City Medical Center provided two-day training sessions for its nurses.

"This system really helps our nurses do their job better," said Michelle Rosbury, clinical coordinator. "We have always been excellent in patient safety and accuracy, but now we can prove it."

"It is due to our nurses' consistency in scanning the patients' medications and armbands," she said. "We are also at the top of our corporation."

According to the U.S. Pharmacopoeia, this technology has been proven to drastically reduce medication mix-ups

A 1999 study by the Institute of Medicine found that 98,000 Americans die annually from preventable medical errors in hospitals.

A multi-disciplinary task force at LCMC including pharmacy, nursing, respiratory, information services, education and physician support representatives provided input and feedback in preparation for the new system's implementation.

"It took six months to ensure that every single pill and medication had a bar code on it," said Janie Killian, pharmacy director. "Even if it came from the manufacturer, we still double check it by scanning it when it comes in to further our goal of being more accurate."

