

REDUCING MEDICATION ERRORS

Using Graphics to Improve Patient Safety

By: Joe Mauldin

Medical professionals have spent significant time and money studying how to accurately administer medication to patients. As one scholarly article stated: "Medication errors are a universal healthcare concern."¹

And why wouldn't medical professionals and organizations focus on such an important topic? The ability of medical staff to accurately administer medication is a critical component of any hospital visit. If errors are made by the medical staff, there can be significant consequences including a longer recovery time, a costly lawsuit against the medical facility or a loss of life.

As our world becomes more and more technologically advanced, there also exists

the potential for far more distractions in the work environment. Medical facilities are no exception to this.

According to Michael I. Harrison, PhD; Ross Koppel, PhD; and Shirly Bar-Lev, PhD: "Many unintended and undesired consequences of Healthcare Information Technologies (HIT) flow from interactions between the HIT and the healthcare organization's sociotechnical system — its workflows, culture, social interactions and technologies."²

There is a great deal of interaction within any medical environment and here is how one medical facility is taking steps to decrease distraction and improve patient safety.



Alliance Global Graphics (AGG) worked with Sparrow Medical Systems to develop the best possible graphics application to work toward this objective. A 3M vinyl was selected that offered adhesive strong enough to stick to the floor without causing a tripping hazard. Yet, it can also be removed without damaging the floor surface.

In July 2017, Sparrow Health Systems in Lansing, Michigan, decided to create “NO INTERRUPTION ZONES” at the medication counters throughout the facility. Bright red graphics were placed on the floor at every medication counter. Each graphic read “NO INTERRUPTION ZONE” in large, gray capital letters. The concept is very simple. As long as any healthcare professional in the building is standing on one of the “NO INTERRUPTION ZONE” graphics, they are not to be interrupted by co-workers for any reason. The objective is to afford each medical professional with the ability to focus on medication distribution without distraction.

A detailed data specifications sheet for the slip-resistant laminate can be accessed at the

following link: <http://multimedia.3m.com/mws/media/1098952O/scotchcal-luster-overlamine-3645-and-matte-overlamine-3647.pdf>.

Alliance Global Graphics has developed a reliable database of hundreds of graphics manufacturing and installation centers all over the world and deployed a local team in Michigan to assist with a site survey. Hospital personnel were consulted to confirm the installation locations for each individual graphic. The team then completed the custom placement of each graphic and wore medical grade clothing when needed.

The result is a simple-to-execute graphics system aimed at reducing medication errors and improving patient experience and safety.



Joe Mauldin is the Director of Alliance Global Graphics based in Columbia, Maryland. He has more than 16 years of experience in the sign and graphics industry and specializes in helping companies implement brand-related and safety-related graphics programs all over the world. He can be reached at joem@alliancegg.com or by calling 800-765-7446.

¹Canadian Nurse, Improving Medication Administration Systems, October 2006

²JAMIA, Unintended Consequences of Information Technologies in Health Care, September 2007