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Safeguarding Patients with Auto-Identification Wristbands

A white paper by Kevin Allart, Healthcare Business Manager, SATO Europe.

The large numbers of patients cared for in hospitals each day presents significant logistical challenges in terms of identification and safety. It is imperative for individuals' wellbeing, security and comfort that the healthcare sector stay in-step with emerging technologies, including pioneering ID wristbands which provide digital identification and protected data storage, as well as playing a key role in ensuring patient safety.

Traditional hospital wristbands are ill-equipped to adequately fulfil the safeguarding requirements demanded today, presenting only cursory information such as name, date of birth and ID number. This alone is not enough to prevent medical errors and problems with misidentification, which can occur when print becomes illegible through fading or smudging. They are also more prone to falling off due to inferior quality, increasing the likelihood of mistakes and causing distress through delays in the delivery of treatment.

Healthcare staff time pressures and workloads often prohibit thorough vetting of identification, meaning non-barcoded wristbands and service users' verbal confirmation are taken at face value. This is a far from fool-proof approach, with manual processes responsible for concerning numbers of harmful misidentification incidents ranging from misplaced, duplicated or overlaid patient records to medication or treatments delivered to the wrong individuals and even identity fraud.

The scale of today's modern hospital environment furthermore poses challenges in locating where a specific service user is at a given time, not least because they are frequently moved around wards and treatment facilities. This displacement makes mistakes more likely and also contributes to inefficient working practices by slowing down treatment administration, doctor visits, medication deliveries and more.

To protect patients and prevent incidents, it is vital to evolve beyond potentially dangerous practices and ensure optimised identification processes. Forward-thinking healthcare facilities are increasingly achieving this by introducing auto-ID technology systems – providing reliable quality of care from the moment of admission to the point of discharge.

The technology uses barcoded or radio frequency identification (RFID) wristbands that can be printed at the point of admission or at the Nurses' Station, then scanned by a hand-held device to provide identification. This protects the 'five rights' of medication delivery – the right person, the right drug, the right time, the right dose and the right method of administration. Patients' details are immediately visible upon scanning, reducing the risk of misidentification and inadvertent malpractice, while encouraging staff confidence in the accuracy of their work.

Staff also benefit from more streamlined working procedures, allowing them to deliver safe care as quickly as possible. Because digital wristbands can deliver significantly more information than traditional counterparts, clerical obstacles such as illegible or misplaced drug charts are resolved - freeing up valuable operational time by automatically updating medication delivery records and reducing the need for administrative work.

As well as helping healthcare staff and reducing liability, digital ID wristbands also aid patients through comfort and security features. Digital scanning means that service users do not need to be disturbed to personally verify their identity each time a medication is administered or a specimen sample taken, and those who are not able to confirm their name (such as sedated or non-compos mentis patients) are given an extra level of protection.

RFID wristbands provide additional security for particularly vulnerable individuals such as those on paediatric, geriatric and mental health wards. Printed using direct thermal printing technology, these communicate with strategically placed RFID readers to manage access in and out of hospital areas – protecting patients and optimising staff working practices.

This peace of mind can be delivered by implementing auto-identification technologies as part of a complete safeguarding solution, with access to a suite of hardware (including wristband printers, scanners and RFID readers), supplies, integration and maintenance services. Hospitals benefit from the efficiency and convenience of only having to source equipment from one place, making maintenance, support and replacements straightforward. There is also the added assurance that all equipment is compatible and works at optimum performance as part of a reliable, synchronised system.

SATO Europe has more than two decades' experience in developing complete solutions for positive patient identification, combining the most up-to-date technologies with unique know-how. Our portfolio of products is designed to cater for specific healthcare environments, individual needs and varying stay durations, offering comfortable, non-irritable wristbands for service users and reliable, cost-effective systems for hospitals.

SATO Europe's wide range of on-demand printable wristbands provides the flexibility for hospitals to select the product most suited to the patient. Our RFID line for example is ideal for healthcare settings where security is a particular concern and where people may need to be tracked from a distance.

The premium TT line is likewise ideal for more secure areas such as maternity units, with wristband privacy ribbons concealing patient identification. This complete solution enables staff to simultaneously print the mother and baby's bands, ensuring both parts are linked to the same identification number to prevent the mix-up of babies.

Other examples include the cost-effective DT line, which is also perfect for babies and the elderly due to its use of non-abrasive materials that are soft enough for delicate or fragile skin. The direct thermal transfer printing technique offers the durability required for short stays, reliably storing data for up to one week. To offset its short service life, the DT Line wristband utilises Econano® technology, which helps to absorb and reduce the carbon dioxide released into the environment at the point of incineration.

These solutions and more have proven popular with patients and staff and have been developed to deliver the utmost autonomy and flexibility, understanding that there is no 'one size fits all' answer to hospital safety.

In conclusion, patient safeguarding can only be assured when adequate identification procedures are in place. Implementing high-quality barcoded and RFID wristband systems, such as those provided by SATO Europe, are instrumental to minimising liability and avoiding potentially dangerous mistakes. The ROI associated with introducing a complete auto-identification system into



healthcare facilities should not be underestimated in ensuring individuals receive the highest quality care and enhancing staff productivity.

For more detailed information about the benefits to be gained from digital ID wristband systems, please consult our [Testing of SATO's Antimicrobial Wristbands](#) white papers.

About SATO

SATO (TOKYO:6287) bridges the last inch of the last mile for customers by integrating Auto-ID technologies and revolutionary materials to tag and track items, ensuring inventory visibility for improved user experience and business results. Engineering solutions that unleash the power of IoT, it provides value to customers in the form of accuracy, sustainability, labour and resource savings, reassurance and emotional connections. For the fiscal year ended March 31, 2017, it reported revenues of JPY 106,302 million (Euro 900 million*). More information about SATO can be found at www.satoeurope.com or follow us on [Twitter](#) or [Linked In](#)

*Conversion is based on an average exchange rate of 1 Euro = 118.74 Japanese Yen

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