

PHG Technologies

Positive Patient Identification Made Easy

Phyllis Johnson and her brother were worried about their dad. A second CT scan, this one with contrast, verified suspicious areas on his lungs, and he was referred immediately to a pulmonologist and surgeon.

During the recent two-hour drive to the appointment, Johnson, in the back seat while her brother drove, pulled her father's films from the large envelope. At the top of the first film was his name, date of birth and the name of the physician who ordered the test. On the second film was her father's name — with one letter difference — and a different date of birth, 01-03-25 rather than her dad's birthday of 01-05-23.

"Sure enough, it was a different patient," declares Johnson. "The other man was given nearly a clean bill of health when, in fact, he wasn't healthy at all, and there was not as much going on with my father as they thought."

Yes, Johnson and her family breathed a sigh of relief, but there's a twist to this story, a rather ironic one. Johnson is a principal with Brentwood-based PHG Technologies, a

"PHG Technologies' products not only meet our needs, but they offer a better value than any other products we have looked at. Their staff continually goes the extra mile to assure we are getting maximum benefit from all of their products in each of our facilities."

—Pat Walls, Vice President of Materials Management for Province Healthcare

software company that specializes in innovations to improve healthcare efficiencies. One of the firm's most popular products is EasyID, a patient identification system that could have prevented the film mix-up with Johnson's dad.



Sometimes it's *good* to label a person.

"The doctor admitted to me that it's typical for docs to rip the films out, stick them up to the light and look at them without checking the patient data," she says. "They believe by the time the film gets to them, it's correct. If they had diagnosed and treated my father based on the other guy's X-rays, that would not have been good, to say the least. And, conversely, the other man wouldn't have been treated at all."

Brian Moyer, PHG Technologies' president, says prevention of medical errors was the catalyst behind EasyID's development. A 1999 report from the National Academy of Science's Institute of Medicine made global headlines when it revealed that medical errors kill 44,000 to 98,000 people a year. Another study by researchers at the medical schools at the universities of Pennsylvania and California said machine-readable automatic identification systems enhance hospital patient safety — and even save lives. The study specifically cited barcoding as an ideal technology to identify patients.

Barcoding is the secret behind EasyID's success. The program easily interfaces with a hospital's ADT (admission, discharge and transfer) system, which triggers EasyID to print customized identification labels, wristbands and other electronic documents using any standard laser printer. Nearly all EasyID users opt to include one or more barcodes, says Moyer.

"We work with several different

technologies that can provide machine-readable patient identification, including magnetic strips and radio frequency tags or chips but barcoding remains the technology of choice for efficiency and investment value."

"With EasyID, you get a crisp, clear label with a large, readable font. Add to that the barcode, and you can get computer confirmation of the patient's identity," he says.

One study of hospital identification systems cited a 5.5 percent error rate caused by the use of conventional patient wristbands.

"Believe it or not, a majority of hospitals in America still use embossed cards to identify patient information on documents and wristbands. Many times, the words are illegible, and the technology itself is outdated and expensive to repair, which is unfortunate, because it breaks down frequently," says Moyer.

An investment in EasyID will usually pay for itself in a year or less, he adds.

"EasyID has greatly enhanced our ability to identify patients. It's a great improvement over our old embosser."

—Laura Smith, Chief Nursing Officer at Byrd Regional Hospital in Leesville, La.

After EasyID, the next step toward increased efficiency is PHG Technologies' CartSort, which uses the barcode to track patient supply use and charges. Other PHG Technologies products are:

- INTEGRA, which automates supply acquisition and distribution;
- OnTrac, which schedules surgery and its critical needs, including the room, equipment, personnel and supplies; and
- CATS, the capital asset tracking system, which monitors asset information such as location, age, condition, depreciation, maintenance schedules and repair history.

Over 250 modules of the company's technologies are installed in hospitals in 29 states.