

Implementation of an Electronic Pathology Specimen Tracking System to Ensure Patient Safety

The Problem

The Operating Room processes many surgical cases every day. Specimens directed to Pathology are unrecollectable and as such there is no room for error. These sensitive specimens must be tracked along each step of the process so that there is control and ownership along the way; with the ultimate goal if each collected specimen is received in Pathology.

Aim/Goal

- Track the total process from collection in the Operating Room to its being time accessioned in the pathology department; each step of the process has an associated time and name attached
- Improve teamwork between the OR department, the couriers, and the Pathology Department
- Improve quality and eliminate the possibility of a misdirected specimen
- Reduce the stress on the teams when specimens are misdirected
- Reduce hand offs between staff
- Streamline the actual specimen reconciliation process

The Team

- Perioperative Nurses, Surgical Technologists & Physicians
- Perioperative Systems Analyst and IS Development Team
- Transport Services
- Pathology Management and Technical Staff

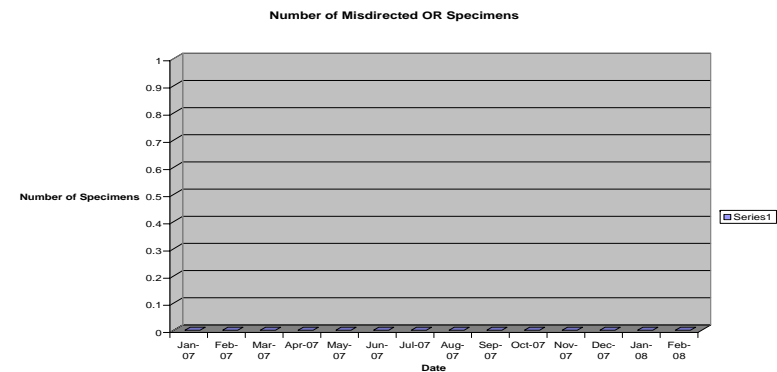
The Interventions

- Perioperative Systems Analyst and IS Team developed an electronic tracking system
- Electronic documentation and automated generation of the pathology requisition helps to ensure patient safety

- There is real time review of the clinical data, specimen, disposition and markers in the OR
- The OR has electronic review and sign-off
- The OR specimen handoff is sequential
- The specimen is tracked step by step from the OR to the time it is accessioned in the Pathology Department

The Results/Progress to Date.....

No specimens have been lost or misdirected over past year



Lessons Learned

- Patient safety is our first priority
- Team work is the first key to making lasting change
- Every step of the process is important: OR, Transport, Pathology
- Electronic tracking facilitates work flow and makes troubleshooting much easier
- Real time specimen reconciliation is preferable

Next Steps/What Should Happen Next:

- Implement this system for other “high volume” departments to eliminate the potential for misdirected specimens

