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New Patient Safety Measures Now in Place at Clinch Valley Medical Center

RICHLANDS, Va. – Bar-coded medications are now in use on all patient floors at Clinch Valley Medical Center in Richlands. Available in only about one percent of hospitals nationwide, the new technology is a part of the hospital’s commitment to patient safety.

Bar coding is one component in a computer-based system known as *eMAR*. Short for Electronic Medication Administration Record, *eMAR* details each patient’s personal, specific medication requirements, as prescribed by his or her doctor. CVMC began preparations for using *eMAR* last year and has now fully phased in the technology on all patient floors.

“We are pleased that our commitment to patient safety and technology keeps Clinch Valley Medical Center on the cutting-edge of healthcare,” said Peter Mulkey, director of Pharmacy. “All staff are trained in its use, and the Pharmacy has a sophisticated, quality-controlled system of applying bar codes to all medications not already compatible with this technology.”

Mulkey said medication errors represent one of the largest areas of preventable injury to hospital patients. “We want our patients to be able to completely trust that the medications they receive will help treat and cure them, not hurt them,” he said. “*eMAR* helps ensure that patients receive the right medications at the appropriate dosage and intervals.”

Here’s how *eMAR* works. When physicians prescribe medications, the written orders are scanned to pharmacy, transcribed by a pharmacist and then entered into the *eMAR* system. The system checks to make sure the patient isn't allergic to the drug and that it won't cause problems with other medications.

Once a prescription is entered into the *eMAR* system, each dose is shrink wrapped and assigned a bar code linking the medication to the patient’s orders entered in *eMAR*.

The *eMAR* technology also performs other safety checks and electronically updates the patient's records. *eMAR* is linked to similarly bar coded patient wristbands and ensures accuracy to the five “Rs” of medication administration—the right patient, the right

medication, the right dose, the right time, and the right route of administration.

Mulkey said only about one percent of hospitals nationwide have bar code systems. All hospitals in the HCA Hospitals-Southwest Virginia health system – Clinch Valley Medical Center, Lewis-Gale Medical Center, Montgomery Regional Hospital, Alleghany Regional Hospital and Pulaski Community Hospital – are now, or will soon be, using this technology.

The FDA estimates that the implementation of its barcode rule could help prevent almost 500,000 adverse events and transfusion errors over 20 years. By avoiding mistakes, the FDA anticipates financial savings of \$93 billion in the 20 year period.

Clinch Valley Medical Center in Richlands, part of the HCA Hospitals of Southwest Virginia network, is a 200 bed acute care hospital. In addition to comprehensive cancer services, CVMC offers specialty care for the heart and lungs, emergency services, physical rehabilitation, skilled nursing, pediatrics, obstetrics and advanced diagnostics.

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