

The Pulse of RFID in Health Care

There is a great deal of interest in how RFID can help hospitals become more efficient, but there is a lot of confusion about what type of RFID to use.

By Mark Roberti

Oct. 29, 2007—This week, we announced that RFID Journal will host [RFID in Health Care](#), a one-day event co-located with the Health Care Supply Chain Management Summit, which will run Jan. 23-25 at the Westin Casuarina Hotel in Las Vegas (see [RFID Journal Launches RFID Health-Care Event](#)). This follows our decision to run a preconference seminar entitled [RFID's Role in Improving Hospital Operations](#) at [RFID Journal LIVE! Canada 2007](#). The response to both programs has been exceedingly strong, indicating a great deal of excitement about RFID's potential in health care.

Clearly, the word has gotten out that RFID can deliver a great deal of value in the health-care supply chain, and in hospital operations. In fact, perhaps in no other industry is the return on investment from RFID clearer than in health care. RFID can improve the utilization of high-value assets, reduce the workload of nurses, enhance patient safety, improve billing procedures and more.

Any single application of RFID could deliver an ROI within 18 months. But I think it is critical for health-care providers to think of RFID not as a tool they can use to solve a single problem—tracking assets, for instance—but as an infrastructure that will grow over time to support more applications.

Why is this important? Well, you don't want to put in one system enabling you to track assets, a different system that monitors patients and yet another to manage your supply chain. The result would be a high cost of ownership for each system, and potentially a lot of RF noise in the hospital that could affect the performance of all systems.

RELATED_ARTICLES Right now, there are many different RFID systems being offered to hospitals, including passive high-frequency (HF) wristbands for identifying patients, ultrahigh-frequency (UHF) systems for use in the supply chain and active systems for tracking assets, as well as Wi-Fi-based systems and ultrawide-band (UWB) systems. Each is good for some applications and not as good for others. The challenge for hospitals is to choose a system that can be used to solve one problem today and be leveraged to address additional issues later on.

These are complex issues, and one of the best ways to get educated about what works in a hospital or clinic is to hear directly from those who have already made choices and deployed systems. That's why we've invited end users to share their experiences at our health-care programs. These are unique opportunities to hear what they did right, and what they'd like to do over again.

Mark Roberti is the founder and editor of RFID Journal. If you would like to comment on this article, click on the link below.