



## Patient Security System Newsletter

HUGS—PEDZ—PASSPORT

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# The SAFE ZONE

### THE BEAUTY OF REGULAR ASSESSMENTS

The older I get, the smarter my dad seems. As a child, I always wondered why dad took “the long way” when getting into our family car. Whenever it was time to drive our car, whether we were going one mile or 1,000 miles, Dad always made a quick detour so that he could check all four tires to make sure they were OK. Not only that, but every time he gassed up, he invested a few seconds checking the oil. Overkill? Maybe, but Dad knew that regularly investing seconds in small things right now can save multiplied hours of frustration and heartache from bigger problems later.

### AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION ...

What if your staff could invest seconds to save hours? What if they could make small assessments now to avoid major alarms later? Just like dear ole dad, they can!

The number one biggest time and energy saver for your staff is to apply the security tags to patients properly. There is no other time saver as effective as proper tag application.

The Hugs tag should be applied so that it will “Wiggle, Not Rotate.” Light consistent skin contact will satisfy your Hugs tag and greatly reduce Check Tag Tightness events and Tag Loose alarms. Pedz and Passport tags should be applied so that they cannot be removed by slipping them over the foot or hand but not tight enough to cause indentations to the skin.

I recall an admirable Nurse Manager standing up during one of my training sessions and saying, “Ladies, please do not be offended when thirty minutes after you apply the tags to your patients, I come by to double check that it is applied correctly.” She knew that an ounce of application attention is worth a pound of answering alarms.

### A STITCH IN TIME ...

The second way to save time and energy for your staff is to assess the tag application regularly. Assessing tag fit once or twice every shift by touching it with your hands and adjusting it as needed will noticeably reduce your Patient Security alarms. Properly assessing your security tag does not require extra trips. Like my father assessing his tires or checking his oil, take an extra second anytime you are with your patient to touch the tag, look at the patient’s skin as you assess and adjust the tag. Assessing the tag regularly is fast, easy and saves staff time by avoiding unnecessary alarms and needless trips down the hallway responding to alarms.

Hugs tags begin to loosen as babies lose weight in their first day or two. Pedz and Passport tags can quickly become too tight if patients, for example, react to medication or receive fluids after being dehydrated. Frequent assessment is key.

Recently, one observant Nurse Manager noticed that alarm rates were creeping upward. Determined to reverse this, she immediately changed from “instructing” staff to check the tag to making it required “protocol” to tighten the Hugs tag at 8, 16 and 24 hours after initial applica-

tion. Predictably, their alarm rates dropped immediately.

### GREATLY REDUCING ALARMS

Regular tag assessment can greatly reduce the most common alarms. For Hugs tags, Check Tag Tightness events (CTT) are alerting the staff that tags are no longer fitting properly and need adjustment. This event typically continues for two minutes. If the tag is tightened within two minutes, the event auto clears. If the CTT event is not corrected within two minutes it escalates to a high level Tag Loose alarm (TL). TL alarms typically lock your unit, involve audible alarms and indicate that the tag may be loose enough to be removed by a perpetrator. TL alarms must be manually cleared by your staff after adjusting the tag fit. Both CTT and TL can be easily reduced by regular tag assessments.

### GREATLY INCREASING PATIENT & STAFF SATISFACTION

As needless audible/visual alarms and door locking are reduced, interestingly enough, patient satisfaction scores tend to rise and staff alarm fatigue is reduced. Keeping your unit quiet and restful by reducing alarms helps patients, their families and your staff. The simplest ways to reduce alarms is to apply your security tags properly and assess them regularly.

Dad was smarter than I understood way back then. Quick, regular assessments reduce big alarms & needless trips down the hall. Lead your staff to assess the security tags quickly and regularly.

Written by Jeff Smalla, Corporate Trainer, IMS

## FOUR KEYS TO A QUIET PATIENT SECURITY SYSTEM

Needless alarms can create alarm fatigue among staff and negatively impact Patient Satisfaction scores. So, here are four keys to maintaining a quiet Patient Security System:

1. **Apply the tag properly.** For a Hugs tag it should “Wiggle, not Rotate.” For Pedz and Passport tags, it should be tight enough to not slide over the hand or foot but not so tight as to cause indents on the patient’s ankle or wrist.
2. **Assess the tag regularly.** Every 8 hours touch the tag with your hands, assess the fit and make adjustments.
3. **Change tampered straps immediately.** A Tamper Alarm indicates the strap is damaged. It must be changed.
4. **Educate Parents/Caregivers.** Ask them to stay clear of protected doors which can cause alarms and to not pull on the tag.