Would this increase blood donations if it were at the entry way of a cancer hospital?

**Types/Examples of Visual Control**

**Overview:** Visual Control - Get the right information and the right supply/equipment in the right quantity in the right place at the right time. A place where the workplace ‘speaks’ the right way to do it. And it is totally staff driven, for they are effected the most by inadvertent errors and preventable waste. Placing intuitive instruction/warning in the work place can save time and reduce errors. Many times folks need examples to discover similar applications in their work area.

**Goals**
1. Provide starter fluid thinking for visual control type thinking
2. Get the workplace to ‘speak’ the right way to do things.
3. Eliminate avoidable waste and error in the work environment

**Participants**
Management to send the message: No more preventable waste. Staff to learn and deploy visual control basics on a continuous basis.

**Material Required**
Materials to assist in instructionalizing the workplace. Label maker, laminating sheets, etc.

**Procedure**
1. Share with the staff the concept of Visual Control
   a. Place instructions, standards, next steps, warnings…in the workplace. Ideally, the ‘visual’ information is placed at the point of action.
   b. Part of visual control is not just getting the right information, but getting it in the line of sight.
c. Every problem, frustration related with not have the information needed to be successful is a candidate for visual control.

d. Pretend this is your first day at work. What visuals would allow you to be fully functional know where is what, how to do what…in a week.

1. Have staff review the examples below to discover ideas that have direct or similar benefit.
2. Give the staff index cards and challenge them to find areas where visual control of instructions are helpful (save time) and critical (save harm and great cost).
3. Test changes and by get staff to validate its effectiveness. Remember, the goal is to let even a first day employee feel comfortable operating in the environment.
4. Make it fun. Get two neighboring units to do a visual control contest of who can spot potential where the right choice or assumptions must be made to do the right thing.

**Staff Aids / Procedures**

To remind staff of important procedures, dates, times, and other helpful information, consider these visual controls:

- Staff assignments & procedures can be placed on staff lockers as important reminders.
- Need to count days, months or weeks of treatment? Wallet-size calendars can be posted near phone or other places where it is needed.
- Pocket guide for student nurses or float staff can help accelerate learning and increase productivity.
- The back side of an ID badge can be the perfect spot for important telephone numbers, critical clinical values, or emergency procedures.
- Poster inservices were be placed in staff restrooms for easy reading during "down" time. In an OR setting, plexiglass sheet holders were placed on the back of the doors of the stalls to inform staff of new trials, supplies, etc. This might seem intrusive, but it actually help folks slow down during their needed break.

**How Does This Equipment Work ... Again?**

How often do people remember exactly how to work a piece of equipment when it is used only on occasion? To help refresh memories, visual controls can ease their frustration by offering tips on equipment operations. A few examples follow.

- Common instructions for how to probe to answer basic computer questions can be laminated to the frame of the computer screen
- Fax problem-codes and their meaning laminated on the fax machine to keep from looking them up in the manual. Common fax numbers laminated on the fax to reduce searching/calling for the number. Try putting the toner replacement order number or the Repair phone number to speed problem solving along.
- One hospital laminated the operating instructions for the hospital day bed onto the bed itself, behind the cushion. During hospital admission, patients and families are shown the diagram behind the cushion. The procedure has saved staff time and has offered more control to patients/ family members.
Replacing paper in an EKG machine has been made simpler by laminating instructions on the underside of the door to the paper. A diagram depicting EKG lead placement on the body was affixed outside of the machine.

Coordinating Services
An essential part of care coordination is understanding who’s who and who’s doing what. These visual controls can help each caregiver, and the patient, become well acquainted with the multidisciplinary environment.

- To help doctors and other members of the care team locate a patient’s nurse, place pictures of nurses next to their names on the patient assignment board.
- Stickers can be used on patient records to identify the consulting physician on the case. Staff can write the consultant physician name and phone number on the sticker and place it on the front of the chart for quick reference.
- Marker boards can be placed in patient rooms to display the names of the care givers, the day, the patients goals, the patient special needs.
- One organization used visual cards attached to clothes pins to clue all staff what outstanding needs are for the patient going for surgery. The clothes pins were clasped to the privacy curtains or to IV poles. Without a word, one quick glance showed the anesthesiologist which patients needed to be evaluated.

Making A Statement
Visual controls can be used to convey subtle messages that support the organizational philosophy, mission, vision and goals. For example, buttons periodically worn (and recycled) can remind the work force to be sensitive to patient needs "Noise Annoys", "Patient First", "Mobilize", "Lab Casual Day - Our Dress is Casual But Our Attitude Is Not", "Clean hands, caring heart.”

Patient Care Reminders
Of the numerous individuals entering and leaving a patient’s room each day, it is critical that certain special precautions, therapies, and instructions for patient care be followed. Visual controls can be extremely useful in communicating basic instructions to a wide audience.

- Stickers can be used to remind transporters of easily forgotten steps such as notifying the telemetry monitor technician or nurse that the patient is leaving the unit, and notifying the unit staff of the patient’s return.
- “No Liquids” and NPO stickers can be easily converted to illustrations which can be understood by patient populations representing multiple languages. For example, use a picture of a meal place setting and draw an “X” through it.
- “Calorie Count” stickers on patient menus remind caregivers and patients to help document their intake. Have them write on their menus all foods and liquids they have consumed and place their menus in an envelope.
- One hospital uses “No Caffeine” signs (Mug with a slash across it and list of overlooked items such as decaffeinated drinks) help gain compliance with dietary requirements prior to stress tests.
- An Isolation card placed on the patient door can effectively communicate who it applies to, what is to be done and proper procedures to follow.
• If an arm or leg should be kept free from IV sticks, consider placing a large neon sign near the patient and affixing an armband that displays message, e.g., "Do Not Use Right Arm."
• To track and encourage ambulation progress, one organization used “Walk-a-Mile” laminated sheets. They also placed distance markings on hallway walls, e.g., every 25 feet, to track distances achieved by beginning ambulators.
• To help bring services and projects to a close, use “Target Date:______” stickers that provide an end point for all to see.

Cost Reminders
Staff can treat waste loss like it is coming out of their own pocket if they know the value of what they are discarding. Cues and alerts can make a big difference.
• In one organization, a “Blood Tubing Only” sticker was applied to units of blood that did not require the use of a filter. The sticker helped save $6 every time it was followed.
• Place a “Do Not Sit” tent card on unused beds in semi private rooms. It will save time in remaking the extra bed.

Safety Strategies
I believe everyone should wear imaginary ‘safety glasses’ Not real ones, but ones that evaluate ‘control’ points where inadvertent error could do harm. Then
• To reduce the accidental release of bio-hazardous materials going down the trash chute, one hospital placed “Good Trash Only” on the trash doors. Of course, pictures of drainage bags, flower arrangements, with ‘X’ across them accented the point. Similarly, a “Linen Only” sign can be placed on linen chute doors.
• To support patient confidentiality efforts, computer screen savers were set to appear after two minutes of down time.
• When staff leave the patient unit for breaks and other off-unit trips, a sign can be used to communicate “Signout” and coverage backup person.
• A chemical company heard a 30 minute presentation on visual control and painted a red ‘pool of blood’ under those areas where instructions must be treated with heightened caution and cost and safety risks were critical.

Customer Service Hints & Signs
Patients can help themselves if we show them how. Visual control gives control back to them, which they inherently want. It also conveys a service style that proclaims: We care about you.
• Personalize patient care by having the care team sign “Now That You’re Home” get well cards.
• “Instruction for Home” packet is used to collect discharge instructions, and related material. Inserted is a business card to call for belated questions and a medication wallet card that lists to itemize the take home medications.
• Remind staff of “Telephone Etiquette” with tele-tips by placing a card by the phone.
• Each patient room can use a “Do Not Enter” door hanger like those in a hotel. One side can be used to indicate a procedure (for example, bath or examination), the other side can remind staff that the patient is resting.
- When rooms are cleaned while the patient is away, a “Your Room Cleaned By ____” tent card can be placed on the counter to inform the patient that work was done.
- Provide pencils and pads in patient rooms upon admission.
- Ask patients/family members for patient's nickname, hobbies, occupation, etc. to help nurse quickly make patient feel comfortable with their environment. Place the information on a form which accompanies the chart to aid staff in relating to patient's interests.
- Picture communication cards help tracheotomy and foreign patients communicate common requests. The location of the placement of these cards was written on the card to help staff always put them back hence less searching for them next time.
- To keep the environment quite for patient recover, use periodic reminder signs displaying a mime picture and the words “Shhh! Patient resting” or “Healing in Progress.” These should be conspicuously placed in staff gathering areas (e.g., around computer terminals, nurses’ station, etc).
- A colorful laminated sign inviting patients to educational class posted in rooms can increase attendance and subsequent outcomes.
- Pictorial calendars placed in patients rooms to brighten up the room and keep them oriented.

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