

The change that was chosen for this project was a new color coded armband system designed to protect the extremities of patients who could not withstand needle sticks and use of blood pressure cuffs on the arms and legs. This is a new procedure change. The creator of the change idea was a registered nurse (RN) at Jackson Hospital, Karen Tollefson. Tollefson saw a problem with the communication of patients' information regarding use of restricted extremities from pre-op interview to discharge. Up to five nurses were caring for or interacting with a patient during his or her stay and this caused confusion and decreased communication. The first attempt to clarify information and increase communication was to mark the patient's chart but the charts did not always come to the next nurse at the same time the patient was transferred. Tollefson saw the need for more clear communication and offered the idea of using brightly colored armbands that are clearly marked "Restricted Extremity" to be placed on patients during the first step in his or her hospital visit. The armband, and subsequently the lack of complications due to needle sticks and blood pressure cuff usage, helps with the prevention of lymphedema and clotting in dialysis grafts, in addition to other medical issues.

This is a simple change and used throughout entire hospital. Upon admission, during patient background interview, restricted use of extremities is identified and an armband is placed on patient's restricted extremity – brightly with black lettering. This increases compliance with all staff and helps decrease miscommunication regarding patient instructions.

The project, Institutional Assessment for Change, was researched and completed in the months of October and November 2011. The student met with key originators, managers and users of the change element in order to understand and communicate to others the change, its benefits and any questions involved. The student spent 20 hours researching the change, meeting

with key members, observing the change in action, writing the formal paper and creating the presentation, and lastly, presenting the research and results to staff at Jackson Hospital.

The stakeholders involved with this change are patients, staff and medical payers (hospital and insurance companies). This is a significant for patients due to the need to protect overall health and decrease complications with current medical issue. For staff, it is significant because it can decrease additional procedure or time spent on patient care, allows the resource of time to be used more efficiently, and improves communication between staff. Lastly for the payers of medical care, the use of the armband can lessen complications regarding procedures could decrease overall cost of healthcare for patient and payer.

The student is not aware of the change being used nationwide as a guideline or standard. The use of the armband was a first at Jackson Hospital, having never been used here before. There are no known issues or resistance with staff. This change allows staff to work more efficiently due to the increased non-verbal communication. The admitting nurse has slightly more responsibility in the task of interviewing and correctly identifying patients who require the armband but this is a negligible increase in workload and cost. The staff who interact with armband patient are not tasked with additional duties, rather an alleviation of work is seen due to the ability to make faster, more informed decisions regarding the use of blood pressure cuffs, needle sticks or IVs on patients. This is not a national mandate, but has become one at the hospital level that all staff are expected to observe and follow.

There is a vested interest in this change due to the increased patient safety and ability to make faster, more informed decisions regarding the use of needle sticks or blood pressures on patient. Patients are better served and complications regarding needle sticks are decreased and this decreases time in hospital and cost incurred. Staff benefit also from this change due to more

efficient work patterns and better communication. There is no one staff member or other person that loses any vested interest such as power or position due to this change. It allows increased ease in the workplace and helps all staff to work better together.

Staff are the main drivers of the change. They embraced the change due to a former lack of communication. Management at the hospital also drives the change due to a decrease in cost of patient care due to mistakes. There are no known resistors to this change as it is a positive change to practice benefitting all involved, especially patients. Other than staff (human) resource, there are no large costs for change. The armbands are a new purchase but the cost is very low. The armbands were found by Jackson Hospital purchasing section and did not have to be produced by hospital.

The change – the use of armbands to designate restricted extremities – has decreased complications and assisted staff in achieving a higher level of communication. During in institutional assessment for change performed by the student, much was learned and discovered about the change, but also about how a small change can help greatly how a hospital works and how staff interact – in a positive way.