

The Royal Liverpool Hospital has pens at the ready!

Accuracy and reliability are key criteria for any devices used to read barcode data. They become even more important when the data relate to tests on hospital patients. This is why the Department of Clinical Biochemistry and Metabolic Medicine at the Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen NHS Trust recently upgraded its barcode readers. It is now using Marson MT605K pen scanners, sourced and supplied by Spirit Data Capture Limited.



The Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust comes under the auspices of the Cheshire and Merseyside Strategic Health Authority. The Trust provides general hospital services for most of the population of Liverpool and specialised services for people throughout the Cheshire and Merseyside regions. It therefore has a wide range of partnerships with other organisations, including other local NHS Trusts. ▶

Case Study

The Trust's Joint Pathology Services include the Department of Clinical Biochemistry and Metabolic Medicine. This has one of the largest hospital laboratories in the UK. One way in which the department has tried to increase efficiency in the past has been the automation of data capture. This included the installation of pen barcode readers.

Unfortunately, the scanners it chose some years ago (although expensive) proved to be unreliable, difficult to configure, and weren't sufficiently robust for the amount of work they were required to do. The department needs to scan some 15,000 barcodes a day, so it needs a reader that is both very reliable and resilient. The barcodes contain details such as the identity of the patient and a location code, and are used to verify which tests and which pathological samples should be used.

The original barcode readers suffered from interconnection problems, and often wouldn't even work. The Department therefore started to look at alternatives. Trevor Hine, the Trust's Pathology IT Manager and Consultant Scientist, comments: "The accuracy of barcode scanning data is of paramount importance to our department. The unreliability of our pen readers was affecting our ability to scan patient samples efficiently."

Two years ago, the Trust received a mailshot from Spirit Data Capture, offering independent advice on automated data capture solutions. Trevor contacted Spirit, who recommended the Marson MT605K pen scanner/barcode decoder. This is a very durable device with a user-replaceable sapphire tip. It is one of the leading compact units of its type in terms of both cost-effectiveness and performance.



Trevor remarks: "Our charts use many different barcodes. The MT605K was able to scan the specific barcode we use with ease." The pen readers are used in the laboratory to scan record requests into ILab.TP, the department's sophisticated laboratory system. Trevor Hine continues: "The Marson readers are very good – we have had no complaints from the users, and we would definitely have had some if there were any issues!"

"The pen scanners have boosted efficiency, and ensure that the data we enter into the system are accurate. This is vital, as we need to be certain that we are carrying out the right tests on each patient. The accuracy of the pen scanners helps to ensure this. Because Spirit has supplied us with such a cost-effective solution, we have subsequently deployed the Marson readers in many other areas throughout the department."