

# Heartbeat in a bottle for End of Life Care Tutorial

Charis Mitchell RN, PCCN  
Clinical Nurse II  
Surgical Trauma ICU  
Carolinas Medical Center  
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# Indications

- End of life Care is a unique and critical time to care for family members of patients actively dying
- Family members of patients in Intensive Care Units are at significantly higher risk for developing post-traumatic stress disorder and borderline anxiety and depression
- To aide in the grieving and coping process of loved ones and family member we have developed a heartbeat in a bottle keepsake when their loved one has passed in the Intensive Care Unit/Cardiac Telemetry
- Assess family dynamics and ensure appropriate to give keepsake, being culturally and religiously sensitive

# Supplies needed

## Supplies in toolkit

- Used and emptied 2ml or 5ml clear glass bottle (NOTE: do not ever save/use benzodiazepine or narcotic bottles)
- Hemostat clamp
- Red ribbon cord
- Scissors
- Super glue
- Cotton applicators
- Gauze
- Ruler
- Goo Gone

## Supplies RN gathers

- EKG strip of dying/expired patient

# How to create heartbeat in a bottle

# Apply gloves and peel off label of empty bottle using Goo Gone



**Remove metal casing with hemostats and pop off gray rubber stopper from bottle**



**Dry the inside of the bottle using gauze or paper towel (If any dampness remains in bottle, carbon EKG paper will deteriorate)**



# Measure 7 inches of ribbon cord and cut cord





**Insert hemostat through bottom of rubber stopper, then slightly open hemostat and grasp the ends of the ribbon cord with the hemostat. Clamp shut and pull ribbon through stopper**

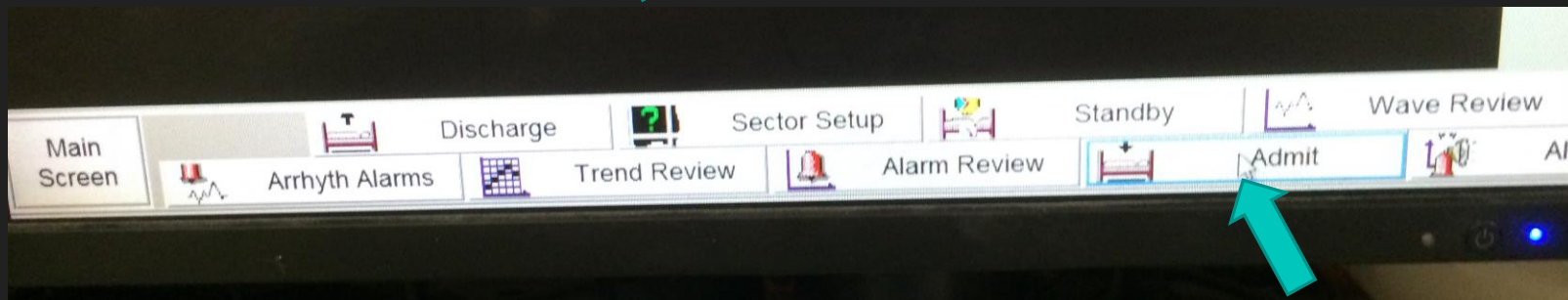
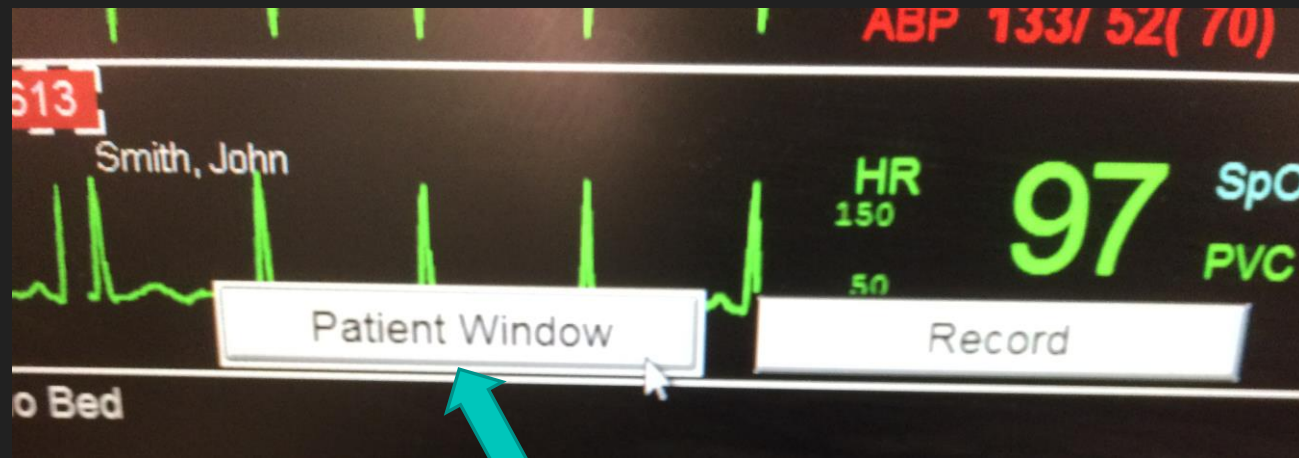


**Tie a knot on each end of ribbon, pull taut, and cut off excess ribbon tail**



**Prepare EKG strip from  
central monitor**

Go to "Patient Window",  
then Click on "Admit"



Write down MRN number, delete MRN from monitor, and click "Update". Verify trauma name removed and actual name updated

11613: Smith, John

Admit

Print Help

Equipment: 011613

\* Last Name: Smith

First Name: John

Date of Birth: 9/ 3/2016

Patient Category: Adult

Gender: [ ]

Height: 0 in

Weight: 0 lbs

Paced Status:  Patient Paced **WARNING**

If the patient has a pacemaker and there is no check in the box, the monitor may not alarm for an asystole condition.

Caregroup: STICU1B

Screen Notes:

Medical Record Number: 0001234567

Retrieve... Update Admit Patient Cancel

\* Required

Main Screen Arrhyth Alarms Trend Review Alarm Review Admit All Controls Patient Window

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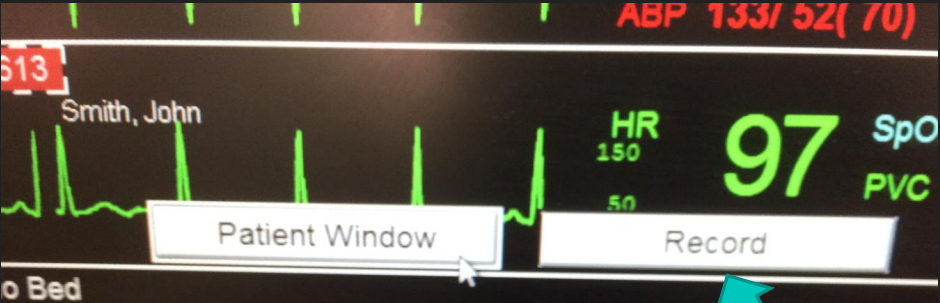
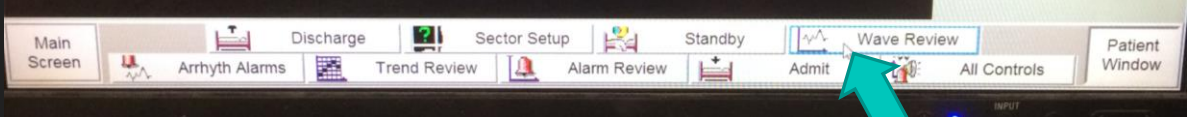
Medical Record Number:

Retrieve... Update Admit Patient Cancel

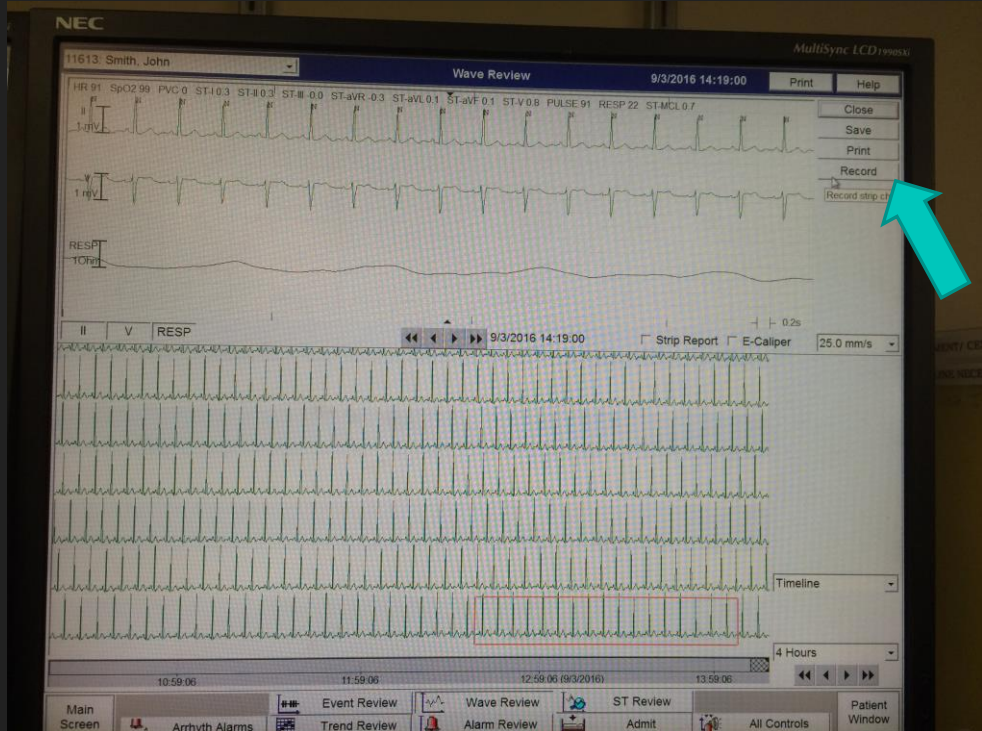
\* Required

Main Screen Arrhyth Alarms Trend Review Alarm Review Admit All Controls Patient Window

Record strip by “Continuous recording” (if still alive and good waveform) OR “Wave Review” and select appropriate recent recording



OR



Click on “Admit” and re-insert MRN into monitor, and click “Update”

11613: Smith, John

**Admit** Print Help

\* Last Name: Smith  
Date of Birth: 9/ 3/2016  
Medical Record Number: 0001234567

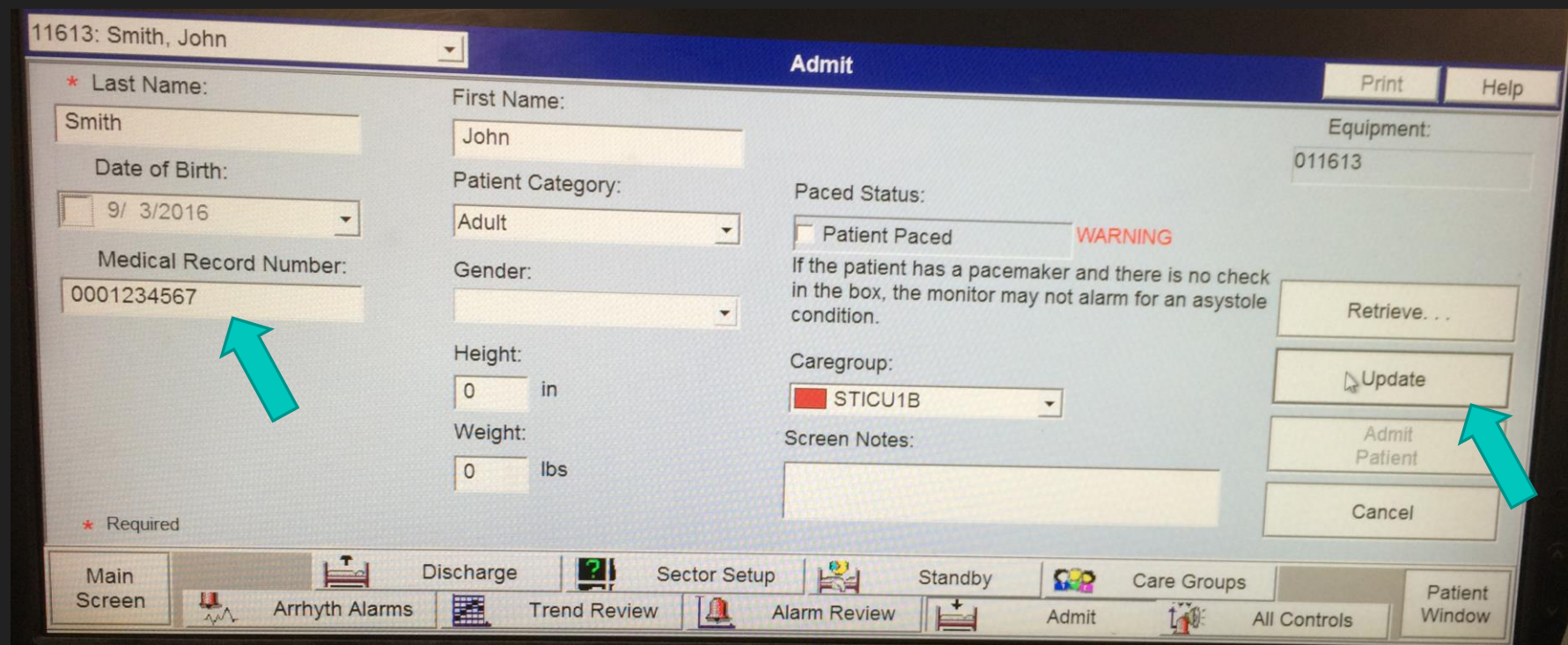
First Name: John  
Patient Category: Adult  
Gender:   
Height: 0 in  
Weight: 0 lbs

Equipment: 011613  
Paced Status:  Patient Paced **WARNING**  
If the patient has a pacemaker and there is no check in the box, the monitor may not alarm for an asystole condition.  
Caregroup:  STICU1B  
Screen Notes:

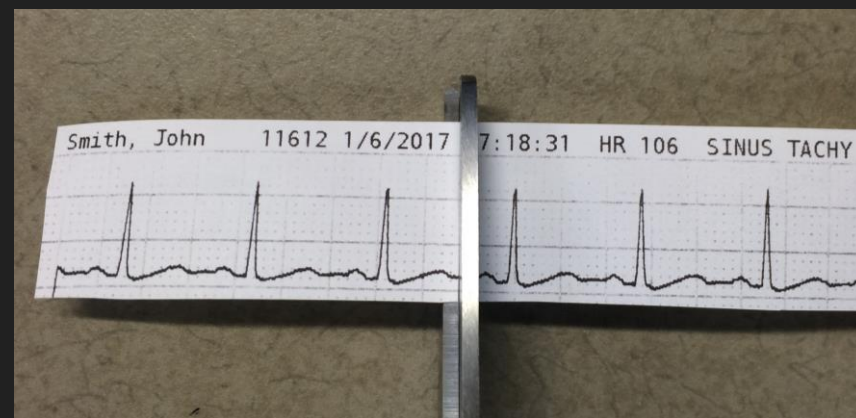
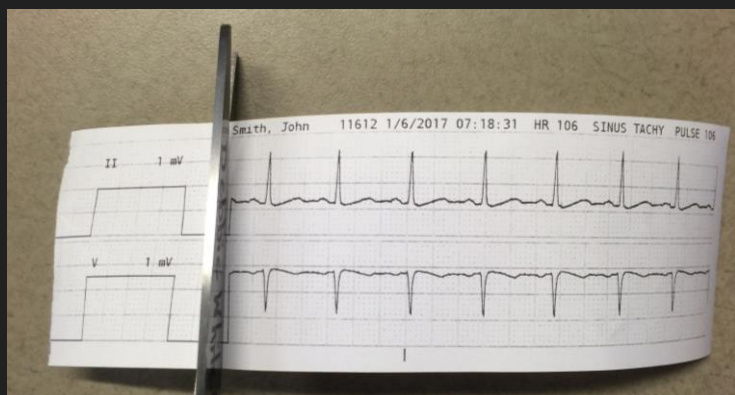
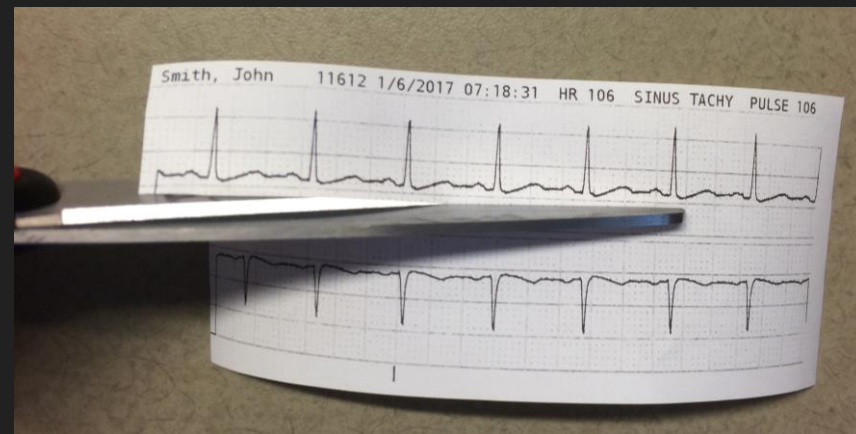
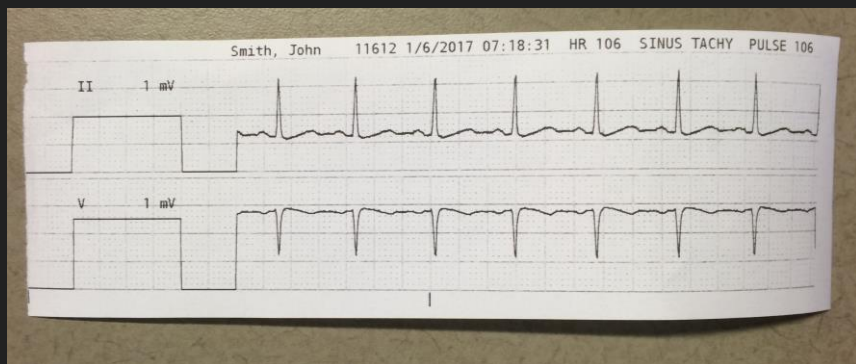
Retrieve...  
Update  
Admit Patient  
Cancel

\* Required

Main Screen Discharge Sector Setup Standby Care Groups Patient Window  
Arrhyth Alarms Trend Review Alarm Review Admit All Controls

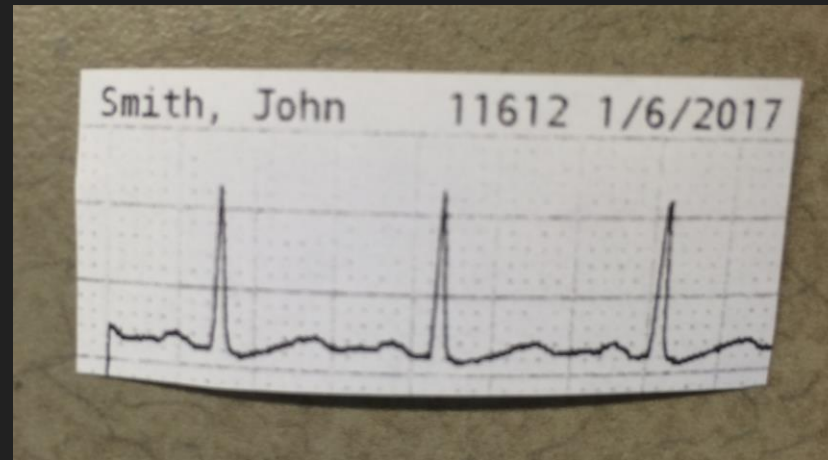


**Trim strip to include patient name, room number and date. Trim bottom one small square box below large square box on Lead II, then cut to fit name and date**





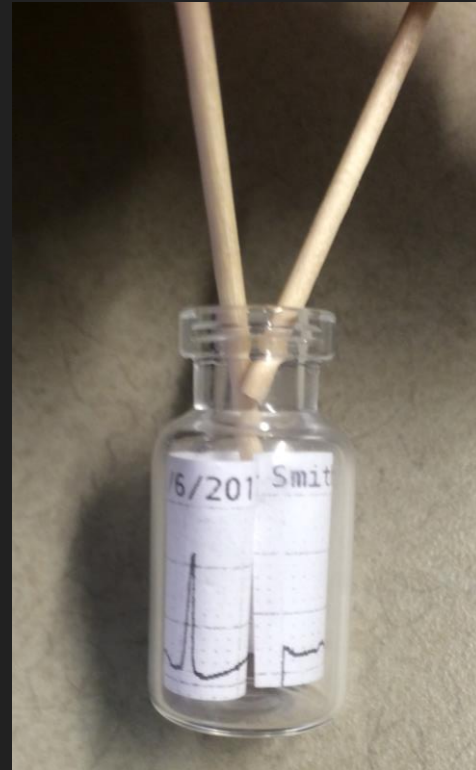
**Strip ready to be inserted into bottle will look like this**



**Begin to wrap strip from right to left with text facing outward around cotton applicator and insert into bottle**



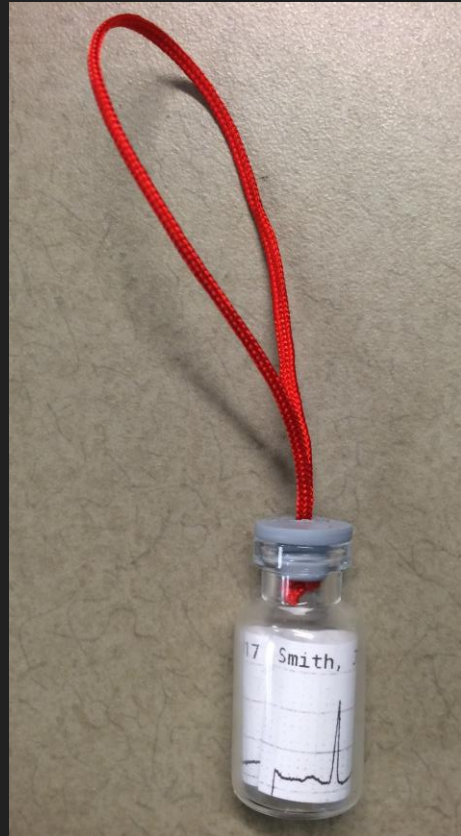
**Unwind EKG tracing from inside outward  
to open strip up**



**Place a small amount of super glue under rim of gray rubber stopper and pop top back into place on bottle. Wipe any excess glue immediately**



**Finished heartbeat in a bottle will have tracing showing name, room number and date of death**



**Presenting heartbeat in a  
bottle to loved ones**

# How to hand deliver heartbeat in a bottle

- This is a rare and unique opportunity to care for our patients loved ones and should be presented when we are in the right state of mind and willing to connect with families
- What to say:
  - In your own words explain the significance of the keepsake
    - Example: We have something to give to you and I want to explain what it is. This is an image (electrical tracing) of John's heartbeat. This is his personal and actual heartbeat. I know you will carry him with you wherever you go and now you have a piece of his heart from one the last times it beat
    - Example if family was unable to be present for patient death: I know you could not be here for his last heartbeat so we wanted to give this to you...(explain keepsake)
- When to deliver:
  - Assess appropriateness and readiness of loved one to receive
  - Post-mortem
  - Prior to family departure

# References

McAdam, J. L., RN, PhD, Fontaine, D. K., RN, PhD, White, D. B., MD, MAS, Dracup, K. A., RN, DNSc, & Puntillo, K. A., RN, DNSc. (2012, November/December). Psychological Symptoms of Family Members of High-Risk Intensive Care Unit Patients. *American Journal Of Critical Care*, 21(6), 386-393.



# Resources

Charis Mitchell: [Charis.Mitchell@carolinashealthcare.org](mailto:Charis.Mitchell@carolinashealthcare.org)

Ribbon Cord purchased on Amazon: [Mandala Crafts Satin Cord 1.5mm](#)

Goo-Gone purchased on Amazon: [Goo-Gone Remover 12 oz](#)