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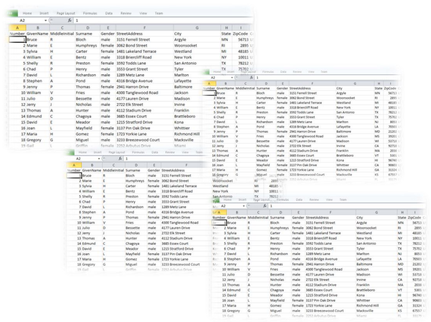
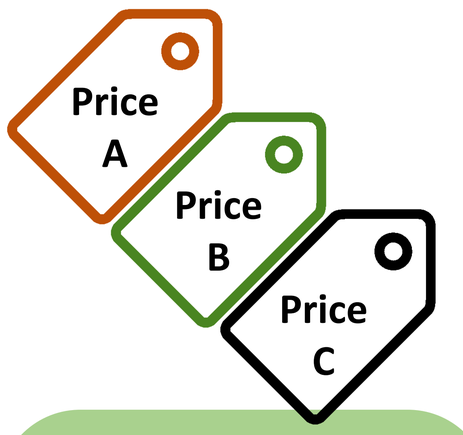
Improving Efficiency of Monthly Gamete Storage Reminder Process at CARE

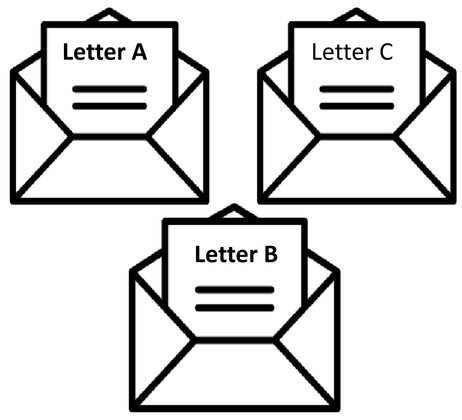
BACKGROUND

Assisted reproduction is an elective procedure. Fertility storage records are specific to every patient because of the different gamete types. Patients can store their gametes for future use which is subjected to an annual storage fee at CARE. Under government regulations, criteria on what gametes and how long they can be stored are influenced by many factors, such as patient's gender, marital status, medical conditions and age. It is a patient/couple's choice to embark on a fertility program using their gametes; start a fresh cycle; terminate their storage; or to transfer to another fertility centre. These dynamic changes make the payment reminder process at CARE less straightforward.

BEFORE







(1) Manual filtering of records
With the Excel spreadsheet of an approximate total of 420 records, the Patient Service Associate (PSA) has to manually filter line by line to determine which storage is due in that particular month, and what is the gamete storage type affected.

(2) Determine the storage fees
The annual storage fees are dependent on the gamete storage types. Every reminder cycle, the PSA had to constantly keep herself updated on the changes for the storage fees for different gametes.

(3) Preparation of reminder letters
The PSA had to prepare different letters and manually transcribe the necessary information on them. The content of the letter is dependent on the patient gender, the female's age and the years of gamete storage. There is a monthly average of 35 letters to be sent.

METHODOLOGY

1. A computer logic flow was drawn up by determining the common influencing factors of the gamete storage record information; and the exceptional criteria were also identified.
2. Prices of the storage were reviewed to standardise to one common storage fee for all gamete types.
3. Fixed letter templates were used and dynamic fields such as patient's name and mailing address, were allowed.

AFTER

(1) Click a button
The computer reminder logic will automatically filter out the affected gamete storage records in that particular month.

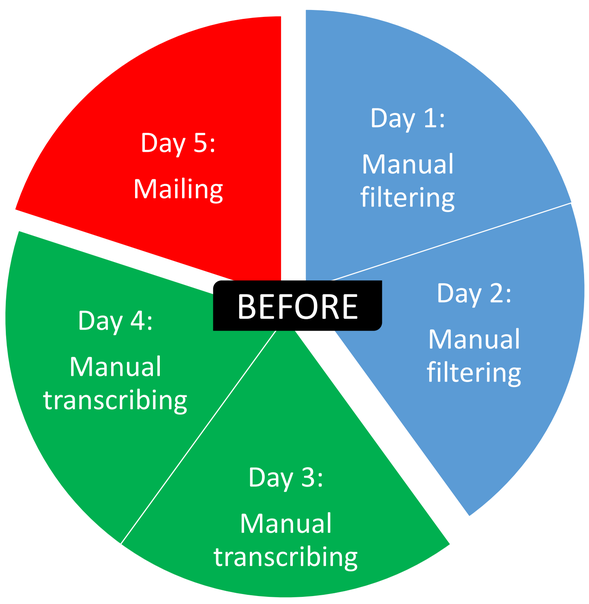
(2) Send to printer
This logic also automatically generates the different reminder letter templates, which are then sent for printing.

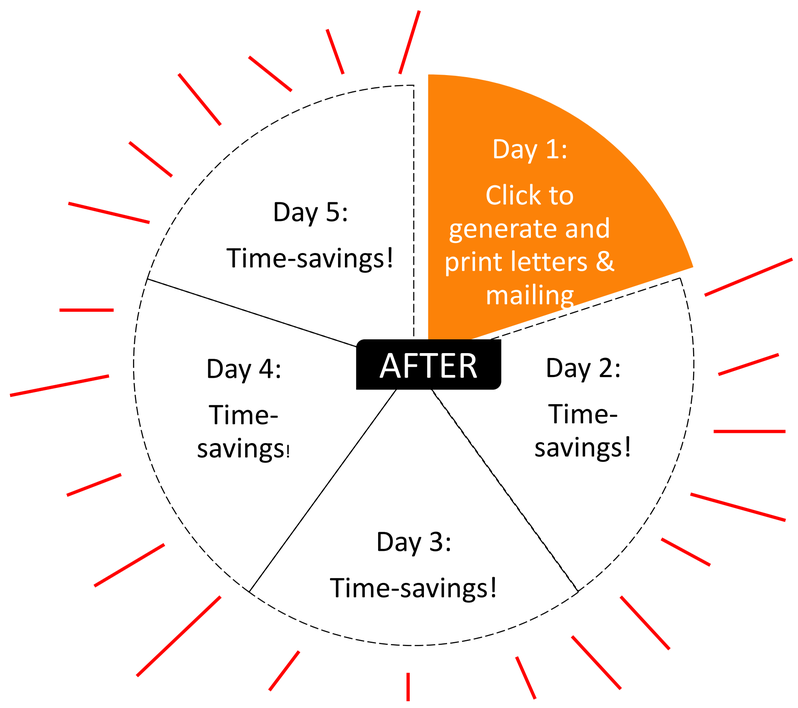
(3) Ready for mailing
No manual transcribing by the PSA is required anymore, as all the necessary information are printed too. All printed letters are ready for mailing.

CONCLUSION

The improved efficiency of the monthly gamete storage process results in significant time-savings for the PSA, allowing her to be more productive in her other daily clinic assignments. This also reduces the anxiety on the only PSA to complete both reminder process and other daily responsibilities every month. Patients are now receiving these reminder letters more timely which allows them to have sufficient time to plan the usage of their gametes before their due date. Additional feature to send out reminder emails automatically can be further explored in this system.

RESULTS





Every month, the PSA used to spend an average of 5 days to complete one reminder cycle. After implementation of the computer logic, the PSA now takes only 1 day to complete the cycle. Each activity is further broken down into the average hours spent each time.

Activity	Average hours taken (hours)
Manual filtering	3h
Manual transcribing	1.5h
Click to generate & print letters	1h
Mailing	0.5h

TOTAL TIME SPENT	
BEFORE	**AFTER**
9.5 hours	1.5 hours

7 hours saved each month

84 hours saved each year

84% time-savings