



# Improving Patient Understanding of Pre-test Instructions with easy-to-understand icons on SHP CPOE lab forms



Polyclinics  
SingHealth

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## INTRODUCTION

Prior to the implementation of the appointment system in SingHealth Polyclinics in 2017, patients with fasting laboratory tests were informed to go to the laboratory between 08:00am to 10:00am. The lab investigation form will bear an icon for “fasting” instruction together with the reminder to “Please come to the lab between 08:00 am to 10:00am”. However, with the current appointment system, this instruction is no longer relevant and were causing patients to be confused. We had also received feedback that the “fasting/ non-fasting” icons were complicated and difficult to understand.

**Old Form (Fasting):** Polyclinics SingHealth LABORATORY INVESTIGATION FORM. Fasting icon: crossed-out fork and knife. Text: \*Plain Water Allowed, \*\*No Food or Beverages from 10pm. Please come to the lab between 08:00am to 10:00am.

**New Form (Non-Fasting):** Polyclinics SingHealth LABORATORY INVESTIGATION FORM. Non-Fasting icon: checkmark and fork and knife. Text: \*Plain Water Allowed, \*\*No Food or Beverages from 10pm. Please come to the lab between 08:00am to 10:00am.

## OBJECTIVE

1. To enhance clarity of pre-lab test instructions (fasting or non-fasting) for patients by redesign of the icons on the CPOE form.
2. To eliminate confusion regarding lab appointments for patients.

## METHOD

- Examined patients feedback on the fasting and non-fasting icons that were printed on SHP CPOE lab forms
- Reviewed the appropriateness of a default instruction that was being printed on all fasting lab orders
- Redesigned the icons to provide clearer pictorial instructions that can be easily understood by patients from all age groups and literacy levels
- Removed the default instruction
- Several iterations of icon designs were proposed and tested on members of the public, family members and friends of the team

## RESULTS

1. Adoption of easy-to-understand fasting and non-fasting icons to be printed on CPOE lab forms that provided all patients with clear pictorial instructions.
2. Removal of the irrelevant instruction that was printed by default on all fasting lab orders to eliminate confusion. Patients would just arrive according to their scheduled lab appointments.

**Old Form (Fasting):** Polyclinics SingHealth LABORATORY INVESTIGATION FORM. FASTING NEEDED icon: crossed-out fork and knife. Text: No food and beverages 8 hours before test. Plain water allowed.

**New Form (No Fasting):** Polyclinics SingHealth LABORATORY INVESTIGATION FORM. NO FASTING NEEDED icon: checkmark and fork and knife. Text: No food and beverages 8 hours before test. Plain water allowed.

## CONCLUSION

After the implementation of the changes in the CPOE laboratory forms in March 2018, patients were no longer confused and there were no more negative feedback received regarding the design of the lab forms.