



Press Release

- UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 9th September -

New standard to address missing link in hospital supply chain processes

BRUSSELS, Belgium 9th September, 2013 – Medication errors are one of the most common causes of preventable adverse events in the healthcare system. Identification of a medicine, up to the moment of administration, is therefore a key element of a safe medicine dispensing procedure in hospitals. Indeed, preliminary studies have suggested the use of bar codes on medicines to the single unit level can help to reduce medication error rates by 41.4%¹.

Point-of-care verification systems and traceability systems rely on the effective capture of data of healthcare products at all packaging levels, whenever dispensed, administered, distributed or used. But until today, hospitals were confronted with the lack of globally harmonised standards on how to identify products at lower levels of packaging such as a single-packed catheter or the individual blister cell from a multi-cell blister card.

A GS1 Healthcare work group, consisting of over 80 supply chain experts, took the challenge of agreeing to clarify and **update the GS1 Standards to provide guidance on how to identify healthcare products at the single unit level also referred to as “Level Below the Each”**. This new standard will provide clear and consistent guidance on how to identify at this level.

Commenting on the need to use one single global standard, Frédérique Fremont, Robert Ballanger Hospital (France) and co-chair of the Level Below The Each Work Group said “ *It is essential that healthcare providers work with manufacturers to implement Level Below the Each marking, as this will enable us to reach the critical mass adoption of standardised and automated processes that will reduce medication errors and ensure safe use of medical devices*”.

Updates have been made to **the GS1 Healthcare GTIN Allocation Rules**² that incorporate guidance on how a ‘responsible entity’ in the Healthcare supply chain should identify that ‘Level Below The Each’ trade item, including, as examples; single unpackaged pills, pills packaged in blister cells, unpackaged liquids, single-use non-sterile devices such as screws and pins, or multi-use non-sterile devices such as a blood pressure cuff.

Recognising the impact on patient safety of this accomplishment, Peter Tomicki, Zimmer and co-chair of the Level Below The Each Work Group, stated “*in Healthcare, lower levels of packaging exist that require identification. This new standard will provide clear and consistent guidance on how and who identifies items at these levels.*”

Congratulating the Level Below The Each Work Group on their work, Dr Roberto Frontini, President of the European Association of Hospital Pharmacists, said: “*GS1 has taken an admirable lead in creating a globally applicable bar code standard for the Level Below the Each that manufacturers and others can implement. This helps to overcome a remaining obstacle to achieving medicines for hospitals bar coded to the single unit. In doing so, the new standard offers great promise for patient safety and the prevention of medication error by opening the prospect of bedside scanning in hospitals at the point of administration as a common practice. We look forward to more discussion about the use of the standard at a high level meeting on bedside scanning in Leuven on 14 October.*”

¹ Poon EG et al. Effect of Bar-Code Technology on the Safety of Medication Administration. N Eng J Med 2010;362:1698-707. <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMsa0907115>

² <http://www.gs1.org/healthcare/implementation/aidc>



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About EAHP

The European Association of Hospital Pharmacists is a Federation of national associations of hospital pharmacists. Its European membership includes more than 21,000 professionals. EAHP's aim is to establish a common pharmaceutical policy in Europe. It represents the interest of the profession at the European level, contributes to the scientific development of hospital pharmacy and to the advancement of the position and role of the pharmacists in hospitals. www.eahp.eu

About GS1 Healthcare

GS1 Healthcare is a global, voluntary user community bringing together all Healthcare supply chain stakeholders, including manufacturers, distributors, Healthcare providers, solution providers, regulatory bodies and industry associations. The mission of GS1 Healthcare is to lead the Healthcare sector to the successful development and implementation of global standards by bringing together experts in Healthcare to enhance patient safety and supply chain efficiencies. GS1 Healthcare members include over 60 leading Healthcare organisations worldwide. For more information about GS1 Healthcare, and to view the report, please visit www.gs1.org/healthcare

GS1 contact

To contact your local GS1 Office, please go to: <http://www.gs1.org/healthcare/about/contact>

About the high level meeting in Leuven on medicines bar coding and bedside scanning

Universitair ziekenhuis Leuven, the European Association of Hospital Pharmacists, and GS1 are working together to host a high level meeting on the future of medicines bar coding in Europe, in particular in relation to the bar coding of medicines to the single unit, and the achievement of bedside scanning. Taking place on Monday 14 October, stakeholders with an interest in attending are invited to contact richard.price@eahp.eu to reserve a place.

For further information, see: <http://www.eahp.eu/events/barcoding-meeting>