

GS1 HUG advocates global approach for Automatic Identification Standards in Healthcare

GS1 HUG™ advocates a truly global approach in the development and implementation of global standards for automatic product identification in Healthcare. The GS1 System of Standards is extremely well suited to fit the specific needs of Healthcare. Therefore, GS1 HUG strongly recommends governments worldwide to endorse the use of the GS1 system, and more in particular the usage of GTIN's (Global Trade Item Numbers).

Global standards for automatic identification provide the opportunity to make the Healthcare supply chain more efficient and accurate, and thus safer. However, to realise all the benefits, these standards need to be global.

Automatic product identification in Healthcare

GS1 HUG acknowledges that countries have regulated national identification systems for Healthcare items. These are obviously critical for many applications such as registration or reimbursement. Today, these national codes are typically required on packaging in a human readable form, but in some countries they are also required in the bar code. Regulatory requirements for identification vary by market, but global product identification should not vary by market.

The GS1 HUG is aiming to make product identification as ubiquitous as in retail. At consumer goods retailers, more than 5 billion transactions, using GTIN's, are carried out each day. This makes it the most widely used system of standards in the world with more than 1.3 million companies having adopted the system worldwide.

At the heart of the GS1 system is the GTIN (Global Trade Item Number). This is an identification number for products and services. These numbers are allocated by the manufacturer, according to the GTIN allocation rules:

- a GS1 company prefix assigned to a company by GS1
- an item reference designated by the company
- a check digit

This GTIN identification number can then be carried on any type of data carrier, a bar code (linear or 2-dimensional) or a radio frequency identification tag, on the specific product or packaging.

A GTIN can serve the needs of every country

GS1 can work with national regulatory bodies to ensure Healthcare items' national identification systems are accounted for in the GS1 Global Data Dictionary as GTIN attributes.

Manufacturers are willing to register GTIN's locally, so they can be loaded into national databases and, if still needed, linked to the national identification number.

However, embedding a national product identification number in a GTIN is not an appropriate solution for the Healthcare supply chain. In addition, national requirements to use other prefixes in the GTIN, other than the standard company prefix, will negate the benefits of global standardisation and should be avoided.

Global standards needed to fully realise the Healthcare and economic benefits

Healthcare is by nature a global sector, with supply chains that often cross borders.

A global standardised system for traceability from product manufacture to patient treatment is imperative to comply with the increasing legal requirements for product traceability around the world.

In cases of cross border trading, a global identification number can be used to identify that product in any country without any restrictions or errors. This means that no trade barriers are created; barriers that could otherwise potentially impact patient care and safety in a specific country, if the product cannot be identified.

It also means that an efficient supply chain is enabled:

- Manufacturers can optimise their production process, while maintaining global reach.
- Distributors and wholesalers can optimise their supply chain management.
- Hospitals and pharmacy retailers do not have to re-package or re-label, and can benefit from more cost-effective software solutions and fully interoperable systems, as they are developed in a standardised way.

In all cases, economies of scale are realised and cost reductions can be achieved, having a positive impact on Healthcare expenditure in any country.

For all of the above reasons, GS1 HUG strongly urges everyone to think beyond borders when it comes to Healthcare supply chain standards and patient safety.

Note:

Since 2005, GS1 HUG (Global Healthcare User Group) has been primarily focused to develop global standards for automatic identification in Healthcare. The GS1 HUG consists of participants from all stakeholders of the Healthcare supply chain: manufacturers, wholesalers & distributors, as well as hospitals and pharmacy retailers. GS1 HUG also maintains close contacts with regulatory agencies and trade organisations worldwide.

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**GS1 HUG™ Global Healthcare User Group
Organisation and Activity Chart - May 2007**

HUG Leadership Team

Ulrike Kreysa, GS1 Healthcare (Project Management & Coordination)
 Rich Hollander (Co-Chair), Pfizer & Mark Hoyle (Co-Chair), Tyco Healthcare
 Frank Brüggemann, Comparatio Health - Jackie Elkin, Medtronic - Nicolas Florin, GS1
 Steve Hess, Merck - Joe Pleasant, Premier - John Terwilliger, GS1 - Peter Tomicki, Baxter
 Mark Walchak, Pfizer - Tom Werthwine, J&J - Volker Zeinar, B.Braun



HUG Membership Support Team
Volker Zeinar, B.Braun

HUG Communication Support Team
Jim Willmott, Smiths Medical



HUG Work Teams

Public Policy
Jackie Elkin, Medtronic

Business Case
Ed Dzwil, J&J Pharma

Auto-ID Data
Mark Walchak, Pfizer
Mark Hoyle, Tyco Healthcare

Serialisation
Steve Hess, Merck

Data Carrier
To be established on completion
of Auto-ID & Serialisation work

Data Synchronisation
Tom Werthwine, J&J
Joe Pleasant, Premier

Classification
Leighton Hansel, Abbott

HUG Local Teams

Australasia

Austria

Canada

Chile

France

Germany

Malta

Serbia & Montenegro
Macedonia

Switzerland

United Kingdom

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