The European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) is calling on the European Commission to ensure that the future pan-European system of medicines verification facilitates, and does not hinder, barcoding of single dose medicines administered in hospitals.

The request came in EAHP's response to a consultation on a future regulatory instrument which will set out the requirements for the unique identification of medicines throughout the European supply chain. The verification system is required to be introduced under the 2011 Falsified Medicines Directive and is intended to safeguard the public against counterfeit products.

EAHP emphasised the positive role barcoding of the single dose of medicine can have in terms of patient safety. It enables bedside scanning and checking of the medicine immediately prior to its administration to the patient and studies have suggested barcoding and checking medicines in this way can reduce medication errors in hospitals by as much as 40% .

However, in their response to the medicines verification consultation, EAHP warned that choices to be made by the Commission on the specification of anti-counterfeiting systems could have unintended consequences on the possibility of pan-European barcoding of the single dose. This might include for example, stipulating manufacturers apply a form of barcode for medicines that could not easily be applied to blister packages.

Dr Roberto Frontini, President of the EAHP said:

"Hospital Pharmacists in Europe feel very strongly about the patient safety benefits of single dose barcoding. It is therefore important that EAHP brings to the attention of all relevant policy makers in the medicines sector the benefits of introducing this approach. We also must ensure the achievement of single dose barcoding is not threatened by developments elsewhere, such as the forthcoming introduction of an anti-counterfeit medicines verification system.

"Single dose barcoding for medicines in hospitals is already a requirement in the United States , and was recommended in the 2006 report of a Group of Experts to the Council of Europe . EAHP is stepping up its efforts to highlight the patient safety benefits and looks forward to further conversations with the Commission, and manufacturers on the topic in the months ahead."

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