

31 AUGUST 2012

The European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) and European Federation of Pharmaceutical and Industry Associations (EFPIA) have recently agreed to work towards a joint vision on the future of medicines bar coding to the single unit administered in hospitals.

This is a long held policy goal of hospital pharmacists because of the strong evidence base for its role in reducing medication errors at the point of administration to the patient. The technology enables healthcare professionals to electronically verify that both the correct medication and the correct dose are being given to the correct patient at the bedside.

The two organisations have been exchanging information in relation to:

- the country-by-country practice of bed side scanning in European hospitals;
- the regulatory and non-regulatory solutions to the problem; and
- the opportunity for the future pan-European system of medicines identification to facilitate EAHP's single unit bar code request.

EFPIA recognise the potential for patient safety improvement that could be made by using medicines bar coding in this way, and have expressed their willingness to cooperate with hospital pharmacists in exploring ways to achieve systematic single unit bar coding.

Both organisations have resolved to continue communicating with each other about the issue, to share relevant information on an on-going basis, and to work towards a joint vision for the future of bar coding to the single unit level.

EAHP President Dr Roberto Frontini said:

"I am pleased that the European Federation of Pharmaceutical and Industry Associations are listening openly to EAHP's request for systematic bar coding of medicines to the single dose administered in hospitals and are working with us to find the right solutions."

Challenges remain and we should not expect immediate results. However there is now constructive dialogue between hospital pharmacy and industry to develop a joint vision and understanding about single unit bar coding. This is a useful step towards allowing hospitals in Europe to put in place the best systems for safe medication administration."

Richard Bergström, EFPIA Director General, said:

"The implementation of the Falsified Medicines Directive is a real challenge and EFPIA wants to work with all stakeholders to set up a cost-effective product verification system to the benefit of all EU patients. We are pleased that the European Association of Hospital

Pharmacists is assisting in the development of the European Stakeholder Model by sharing their professional perspective. The ESM offers many opportunities including increased patient safety in hospital care. EFPIA is ready to address issues relating to barcodes on primary packagings within the context of harmonising serial barcodes on secondary packagings in Europe over the coming years.”

ENDS

For further information please contact [info\[at\]eahp\[dot\]eu](mailto:info[at]eahp[dot]eu) ^[1]

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- 1 - EAHP is an association of national organisations representing hospital pharmacists at European and international levels. More information about the EAHP and its history [here](#) ^[2].
- 2 - Studies have suggested the use of bar codes on medicines up to the single unit level can reduce medication errors by 41.4%. (Poon EG et al. Effect of Bar-Code Technology on the Safety of Medication Administration. N Eng J Med 2010;362:1698-707)
- 3 - More information about EAHP's policy on medicines bar coding is available [here](#) ^[3].

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Links

[1] <https://www.eahp.eu/contact/info/eahp/eu> [2] <http://www.eahp.eu/about-us> [3] <http://www.eahp.eu/practice-and-policy/bar-coding-medicines-to-the-single-dose>