



NEWS RELEASE

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Bar coding for improved medication safety in Canada one step closer

National consensus reached on Joint Technical Statement for drug products

Toronto, Canada - A pan-Canadian initiative was announced today that will ultimately have a major impact on patient safety by reducing preventable medication errors.

In collaboration with pharmacy supply chain stakeholders, the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP Canada) and the Canadian Patient Safety Institute (CPSI) have launched a national project to promote automated drug identification in Canada using GS1 global bar coding standards.

“Relying only on human vigilance to ensure medication safety is not enough; better use of available technology will be important in the 21st century,” says David U, President and CEO, ISMP Canada. “With over 30,000 commercial drug products in the marketplace, there is a significant and overdue need for a coordinated approach to bar coding pharmaceuticals in order to enable automated identification throughout the Canadian healthcare system.”

Collaboration between ISMP Canada, CPSI, GS1 Canada and healthcare industry stakeholders has resulted in a national consensus on using GS1 bar codes as the standard format for labeling medication packaging in Canada.

“Automatic identification such as bar coding adds a layer of safety to our medication use system. It is one of the safest ways to track pharmaceutical products through the supply chain; from the point of manufacturing, to administering medication to patients,” says Alicia Duval, Senior Vice-President, Healthcare, GS1 Canada. “By using machine-readable bar codes, healthcare practitioners and organizations will improve internal efficiencies, and more importantly improve patient safety. In order for this to become a reality, bar codes must be deployed in a standard format on all medication packaging, and readable by health system scanners and software. The GS1 system of standards enables this interoperability.”

Serious medication adverse events causing permanent disabilities or death occur in Canadian hospitals as shown in the 2004 Ross Baker and Peter Norton study. In the study, they estimated that 7.5% of national hospital admissions involved an adverse event, and 20% of these adverse events resulted in death of the patient. Of these events, the second highest cause was medication or fluid therapies. Baker and Norton also found that approximately 37% were preventable.

“Changes in practice need to occur at the national, provincial and local levels to promote a more collaborative and standardized approach to medication traceability to keep Canadian patients safe, while retaining current supply chain efficiencies,” says Pierrette Leonard, Senior Leader, National Partners, CPSI. “In working with GS1 and with the success of creating a Joint Technical Statement with over 34 organizations representing six healthcare sectors, we are one step closer to achieving this objective.”

The goal of both ISMP Canada and CPSI, along with all healthcare partners, is to reduce preventable medication errors affecting patients in both institutional and community settings.

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About Canadian Patient Safety Institute (CPSI)

The Canadian Patient Safety Institute (CPSI) is an independent not-for-profit corporation, operating collaboratively with health professionals and organizations, regulatory bodies and governments to build and advance a safer healthcare system for Canadians. CPSI performs a coordinating and leadership role across health sectors and systems, promotes leading practices and raises awareness with stakeholders, patients and the general public about patient safety.

www.patientsafetyinstitute.ca

About the Institute for Safe Medication Practices Canada (ISMP Canada)

The Institute for Safe Medication Practices Canada (ISMP Canada) is an independent national not-for-profit agency committed to the advancement of medication safety in all health care settings. ISMP Canada works collaboratively with the health care community, regulatory agencies and policy makers, provincial, national, and international patient safety organizations, the pharmaceutical industry, and the public to promote safe medication practices. ISMP Canada’s mandate includes receiving and analyzing medication incident and near-miss reports, identifying contributing factors and causes and making recommendations for the prevention of harmful medication incidents.

www.ismp-canada.org/

About GS1 Canada

GS1 Canada is a member of GS1, the world’s leading supply chain standards organization. As a neutral, not-for-profit organization, GS1 Canada enables its more than 10,000 members – trading partners of all sizes from over 20 sectors across Canada – to enhance their efficiency and cost effectiveness by adopting electronic supply chain best practices.

Learn more at www.gs1ca.org.

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