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World's first drug traceability pilot across global supply chain
BRIDGE pilot demonstrates technology is available today to combat counterfeit drugs and improve patient safety in healthcare

London, 9th February 2009 – As part of the BRIDGE (Building Radio frequency Identification solutions for the Global Environment) project, the healthcare sector has demonstrated a complete track and trace system for pharmaceutical products in a live operating, international supply chain environment through its successfully completed Pharma Traceability Pilot.

The pilot was part funded by the EU and conducted by a team of Technology Providers. The pilot tracked 15 different types of drugs through their supply chain journey, from drug manufacturing/packaging plants in Ireland and the Netherlands, to their final destination, the pharmacy department at Barts and The London NHS Trust, using mass serialisation techniques based upon a hybrid mix of 2-D bar codes and EPC RFID tags. Supply chain wide traceability was enabled through multiple use of EPCglobal's EPCIS capturing information identified by the GS1 System of standards. The mass serialisation solution meets all current worldwide pharma regulations on authentication and track and trace and also addresses the current lack of supply chain visibility of goods shipments faced by the healthcare industry.

With the increasing risk of counterfeit drugs entering the healthcare system, seen in the recent criminal investigation into fake Zyprexa for schizophrenia treatment produced in China and sold into the NHS in the UK, it is essential that technologies which can track drugs and monitor their progress through the entire supply chain are implemented as soon as possible. Delivering correct, authentic drugs to patients quickly and accurately can help reduce medical errors and improve patient safety.

Implementing traceability systems that support swift and effective product recalls can prevent patients from being exposed to sub-standard or dangerous counterfeit drugs. Fourteen major recalls of fake medicines have been ordered by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) in the last three years compared to one in the previous decade.

Data carriers, including GS1 bar codes (data matrix) and EPC/RFID tags, were used in the pilot to enable the full traceability of every single drug product in the supply chain on all levels of packaging and to monitor the progress of its transportation lorries. The implementation of a 4 string data set which included the product code, serial number, expiry date and batch number enabling mass serialisation of packaging items, together with the EPCIS system, delivered the necessary traceability information which was recorded in and out of each supply chain participants' custody. All data stored in the EPCIS system provided real time visibility of the tracked products - such as where the product was, which company had it and how long had they had it for, as well as historical data.

“With the ability to fully track and trace the drugs that we order from our suppliers, we can feel confident that the medication we administer to our patients is safe and authentic. The added benefits of capturing and recording drug expiry dates and batch numbers can also help increase the hospital's efficiency, enabling improved inventory management and quicker response times to product recalls,” commented Patrick Martin, Senior Principal Pharmacist at Barts and The London NHS Trust.

“The success of the pilot demonstrates that the technology required to implement a full international supply chain traceability system is available today. There is no doubt that traceability systems such as that demonstrated by this pilot will in the future have a significant positive impact on the security and safety of the pharmaceutical supply chain. The experience gained by this project will be invaluable when helping our clients to exploit these opportunities” commented John Jenkins, Managing Director, JJ Associates who managed the project.

More information about BRIDGE and the Pharma Traceability Pilot can be found at www.bridge-project.eu and at the pilot's information dissemination website, www.bridgewp6.eu.

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Notes to editor:

BRIDGE Pharma Traceability pilot participants included:

Drug companies: Actavis, Sandoz and Athone Laboratories
Distributors: Kent Pharmaceuticals
Contract packer: Tjoapack
Transport/Logistics services providers: Movianto UK and CPG Logistics
Wholesaler: UniChem
NHS Hospital: Barts and The London NHS Trust

The Solution Providers who implemented the pilot:

Equipment and printing solution vendor: Domino Printing Sciences
Technical design and software developers: Mellor Solutions
EPCIS services provider: VeriSign Inc.
Project management, business consultancy and marketing: JJ Associates
Consultancy of standards and RFID: GS1 UK

Profiles of each of the above can be accessed via www.bridgewp6.eu

About BRIDGE

The Building Radio frequency IDentification solutions for the Global Environment (BRIDGE) project is being supported by the European Union's Sixth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP6) with €7.5 million funding. It is a three year initiative dedicated to research, development, training and demonstration in the effective use of RFID based on EPCglobal standards.

The BRIDGE project focuses on business-based research, provision of information services and hardware (sensors, tags) and software development. This will lead to pilots, deployment and comprehensive training materials in the use of RFID in a variety of business sectors.

www.bridge-project.eu

About EPCIS (EPC Information Services)

EPCIS is a standard used to track the progress of objects as they move through the supply chain. The data shared at each read point in the supply chain provides WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and WHY of each read. EPCIS provides the Information Services necessary for the storage, communication and dissemination of EPC data. It provides standards event capture and query interfaces for obtaining and sharing data about unique objects in the supply chain within and across organisations.

The Pilot Information Dissemination Website – www.bridgewp6.eu

This contains a variety of information about the pilot which is all freely accessible:-

Video clips – a short and long version, in downloadable form.

White Papers – Business and Technical

Case study

Article

Powerpoint Presentation materials

Images gathered during the pilot