

Australian Healthcare Innovation Group Launched



A group of Australasian healthcare businesses may be the most advanced in the world when it comes to supply chain innovation.



This claim was made by Rich Hollander, Senior Director of Packaging Services, Pfizer Inc., and keynote speaker at the October launch of the GS1 HUG Australasia.

"Australians are doing a lot of work on eCommerce and with data synchronisation, you have the advantage of using clean data," he said. "If you continue doing all this great work in a timely manner at the market level, you are the leaders. If you've developed a successful model and have great success stories, then why wouldn't you allow the rest of the world to leverage that? That is the benefit of the GS1 HUG Australasia - it's a direct link to the world's most influential healthcare retailers, hospitals, regulatory bodies, wholesalers, distributors and manufacturers."

Mr Hollander, also Co-Chair of the GS1 Global Healthcare User Group (HUG), said that Europe and the USA could learn a lot about how the Australian Healthcare sector has embraced the GS1 System of data

synchronisation with the implementation of the National Product Catalogue (NPC, including the Australian Catalogue of Medicines) which is underpinned by the EANnet platform - the initiative is expected to save the industry \$200 million annually.

"The GS1 HUG Australasia will give Australia and New Zealand's work global exposure. I can't think of any market around the world that doesn't have a lot to learn about what GS1 and the Healthcare sector is doing here."

Mr Hollander's comments come following discussions about the NPC and the successful Monash Project, which during its first phase last year implemented eCommerce using the GS1 System within the Southern Health network hospital pharmaceutical supply chain. Phase 2 involves extension of the Phase 1 scope and project team, and includes implementation of the NPC by a number of participants.



Join Healthcare group to drive supply chain reform



Aside from generating massive cost savings in the Healthcare supply chain and facilitating traceability of pharmaceuticals and medical devices, a new group steering the implementation of the GS1 System in Australasian Healthcare could help to save thousands of lives.

That was the message from speakers, including GS1 Australia's CEO Maria Palazzolo, addressing the inaugural meeting of the GS1 HUG Australasia in October.

"In Australia, 10,000 people die or are left permanently disabled each year due to medical error," she said. "We have the tools to help change that."

Use of the GS1 System within Healthcare will support reduction in administration costs, strengthen protection against the rising problem of counterfeiting in the medical industry and improve the reliability of eProcurement with Healthcare trading partners.

Driven jointly by GS1 Australia and GS1 New Zealand, the HUG Australasia will work together with the global Healthcare User Group (HUG), which comprises many of the world's largest Healthcare retailers, hospitals, regulatory bodies, wholesalers, distributors and manufacturers. Among them are 3M, B. Braun, Baxter, GSK, Johnson & Johnson, Novartis, Pfizer, Procter & Gamble and Wyeth.

Left (left to right):
Ken Nobbs (NEHTA), Gary Hartley (GS1 New Zealand),
Dr Bruce Anderson (Ministry of Health NZ),
Richard Hollander (Pfizer), Sue Schmid
(GS1 Australia)

Right:
Maria Palazzolo and Richard Hollander

Amid other areas, the global HUG is working on rules for the allocation of Global Trade Item Numbers (GTINs) in Healthcare, a business case for the implementation of the GS1 System, liaison with regulatory bodies globally and the development of a guide for the application of GS1 bar codes in Healthcare. Future work includes data synchronisation and Global Product Classification (GPC).

Whilst working within the terms of reference defined by the global HUG, the local Australasian HUG will define its own objectives and key work areas, said GS1 Australia's Sue Schmid.

"The HUG is all about Australian and New Zealand industry and what is happening now," she said. "It's an opportunity for us to have a local voice, providing local experience into the global standards development and implementation process."

Sue's comments were echoed by GS1 New Zealand's Gary Hartley, who said the Australasian Healthcare sector faced the choice between becoming "a standards maker or a standards taker".

Speaking with Supply Chain Link after the launch, Senior Director of Packaging Services at Pfizer and global HUG Co-Chair, Rich Hollander, said that for organisations operating Australasian Industry, taking an active role in user groups such as the HUGLIT made sound business sense.

"I am involved in the HUG because we must establish global standards if the pharmaceutical and medical device supply chain is going to be effective in addressing patient safety concerns when it comes to electronic commerce and automatic identification. With these standards in place, we should all be able to achieve our objectives quicker and with lower overall cost burden," he said.

In the United States Healthcare industry a mandate exists for suppliers to use a specific set of bar codes for pharmaceutical product identification. Whilst this decision has allowed Healthcare product manufacturers to use a number of GS1 Bar Codes, newer bar code technologies that include two-dimensional components are not within the scope of this mandate. So, at this time such emerging technologies cannot be used by pharmaceutical manufacturers in the US to satisfy these requirements.

"In the past, the pharmaceutical supply chain stakeholders did not have a forum such as the HUG to discuss and agree to user requirements before regulatory requirements are mandated. In this case, some of our end customers, the hospitals, want the lot number and the expiry date on the item level packaging, but due to packaging space and production line printing limitations, we find this hard to do with the linear bar codes mandated by the FDA," he said.

"When it comes to cost burden, while as an industry, we always try to minimise costs we also need to be aware of what it will cost the industry if we don't take action. The HUG and the Australasian HUG work hard to ensure standards around technology are developed based off clearly defined business and user requirements and not based solely on what hardware or software suppliers believe the solutions to be. The HUG is comprised of supply chain users, as well as interested regulatory authorities at this point in order to best achieve our objectives." Said Mr Hollander.

Find out more about joining the GS1 Australasia HUG, contact Tania Snioch at GS1 Australia on 1300 366 033 or tsnioch@gs1au.org

