

Standardized Barcodes on Medication One Step Closer to Reality

Mississauga, ON. (Feb 11, 2011) - HealthPRO is pleased to announce our continued support of the Canadian Pharmaceutical Bar Coding Project. The project, which is now entering phase IV, involves the collaboration of members of the healthcare industry to implement standardized bar codes on all aspects of pharmaceutical labeling. The initiative will have a major impact on patient safety by reducing preventable medication errors.

Headed jointly by the Institute for Safe Medication Practices Canada (ISMP Canada) and the Canadian Patient Safety Institute (CPSI), the initiative is guided by a National Implementation Committee. As a member of this committee, HealthPRO provides project advice and direction to the two agencies.

"With over 20,000 marketed health 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," said David U, President and CEO, ISMP Canada.

The phase IV objectives are as follows:

- Promote pharmaceutical manufacturer and health technology provider uptake;
- Promote professional practice and safety and practice organizations' support;
- Collaborate with public Group Purchasing Organizations for contracting support;
- Provide guidelines for the placement of bar codes on pharmaceutical labels;
- To develop end-user bar code implementation resources;
- To develop national labelling and packaging guidelines for textual information.

Phase IV will also include continued monitoring of global trends in automated identification, and standardized product data descriptors.

The development of national labelling and packaging guidelines is an important step in helping HealthPRO members deliver increased levels of patient care by reducing preventable medication errors. Health Canada is currently working to revise the existing labelling and packaging guidelines. More in-depth guidelines, which build on Health Canada's basic requirements for packaging and labelling, will then be developed by ISMP Canada with input from the Canadian Pharmaceutical Bar Coding Project team. These will be vital in providing guidance to manufacturers to enhance medication safety.

"HealthPRO is pleased to support this vital patient safety initiative as it is of great importance to both our organization and membership. Implementing standardized bar codes on pharmaceutical labels will add an additional layer of safety to the medication system," said Kathy Boyle, VP Services, HealthPRO.

Project results to date have indicated that Canada's health care industry is collaboratively moving towards a safer medication system. The multi-sector collaborative is continuing to receive endorsements from major Canadian health sector organizations. HealthPRO extends our congratulations to ISMP Canada and CPSI for their guidance in this initiative.

About HealthPRO

HealthPRO is Canada's largest healthcare group purchasing organization (GPO). Owned by and responsible to its member shareholders, it offers a comprehensive range of contracts for the highest quality products at the lowest cost, a benchmark product evaluation process and a unique policy of choice and flexibility. Current product and service categories include Pharmacy Services, Clinical Services and Clinical Specialties, Energy management, Nutrition & Food Services, and Special Services. HealthPRO can be found online at www.healthprocanada.com

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