

PTS favours barcodes over RFID, for now



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Secure Symbology (SSI), a developer of pharmaceutical anti-counterfeiting and track & trace systems, has announced its collaboration with the former Pharmaceutical Technology & Services (PTS) group of Cardinal Health (now owned by the Blackstone Group).

The purpose of the agreement is to develop and commercialise enabling technologies that improve the security of the pharmaceutical supply chain by allowing drugs to be uniquely tracked and traced as they move from production floors to pharmacy shelves.

New development

Working under the exclusive collaboration agreement, PTS and SSI have developed an anti-counterfeiting, track and trace solution designed to meet today's regulatory e-pedigree requirements by using standard bar code symbologies combined with a secure, hashed database in a unique way to serialise individual product units.

"SSI's track and trace system, is a complete, immediately deployable solution that includes a means of adding additional layers of security such as RFID," said Renard Jackson, vice president and general manager of global packaging solutions for PTS. "While we don't necessarily expect this technology to replace the future use of RFID, the technology offers a cost-effective, secure, turnkey anti-counterfeiting system that will track and trace pharmaceuticals at every stage of the supply chain."

Multiple symbology

With the ability to accept all 1-D and 2-D symbologies such as RSS or Datamatrix, SSI's patented solution combines technologies to print, scan, grade, verify, compile and transfer serialised data, establishing a confidential, hashed database of a product's packaging and shipment history.

The system creates a practical electronic pedigree for every individual unit, and as a result, serialised product data and verification are available globally for any authorized supply chain member (manufacturer, distributor, wholesaler, retailer, etc.), through a secure software application.

The value of the system is somewhat enhanced by a proprietary database structure developed by SSI that provides pharmaceutical manufacturers with ability to track and trace the movement of each packaged unit through the supply chain, past the point of sale and ultimately to the consumer.

Pilot programme

Through a pilot programme, PTS assisted SSI to develop the ESC System in a real-world packaging environment. The pilot created a complete, end-to-end, solution that combined proprietary and best of breed technology in order to affect all necessary steps for tracking, tracing and authenticating drugs in the supply chain. Having the capability of operating at production line speeds, the equipment is designed to seamlessly integrate into existing production lines of pharmaceutical manufacturers and packagers without any disruption or slow down of the packaging process.

Most existing scanner technology at pharmaceutical dispensing locations is able to read the serialised bar codes, which will help facilitate adoption of the technology. Another important feature of the bar code technology is its adaptability to all pharmaceutical products, including the important area of biologics, which represent a significant portion of high value drugs that are often counterfeited. Currently, the FDA has not approved RFID for use on biologics until further work can be done to ensure that the radio wave transmission does not affect the product.

In addition, the serialised bar code enabled system is viewed as a partner to RFID in the e-Pedigree process. The SSI system, which extends through the entire supply chain, is designed to seamlessly integrate with RFID into the appropriate sub-segments of the pharmaceutical supply chain. Ultimately, once RFID settles on one standard and achieves cost efficiency, we expect the two systems to co-exist.

More Info: <http://www.securesymbology.com>

Source: *Secure Symbology Inc.*