The future of pharmaceutical packaging

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Serialised coding is an excellent anti-counterfeiting measure and, because of this, several countries around the world have made it a legal requirement for their pharmaceutical industries.

Serialisation is the process of assigning each product or component with a unique serial number or code, making it possible to trace items as they move from production and packaging through the supply chain to the end user. This unique identifier is printed onto these items using coding or marking equipment.

The ability to track and trace each product and component throughout the supply chain – from origin to expiration – makes it more difficult for counterfeiters to enter this chain and pass off their products as authentic.

Other reasons for manufacturers choosing to implement serialisation include better visibility. All stakeholders in the supply chain can see where a product or raw material is at any given point, better enabling stock during handling and delivery.

Another benefit is more efficiently managed recalls. Serialisation makes it much easier to locate and retract products, and also means that fewer untainted products are recalled because batches are quickly identifiable.

Serialisation codes can be generated randomly or sequentially. Once the codes have been purchased, manufacturers print a 2D barcode onto the labels of each saleable unit and shipping case. Labels are scanned on the packaging line to determine where the unit must be packed.

One of the challenges of serialisation is label redesign to allow space for the new 2D barcode.

While legislation demands that pharmaceutical and healthcare product labelling continues to contain ever more detailed information, often this information does not fit on a standard label in the space provided on the packaging.

Fix-a-Form® informational booklet labels from Pyrotec PackMedia have significant benefits for the pharmaceutical and healthcare industries by greatly extending the space available for product descriptions and user guidelines, safety messages and contraindications, dosage instructions, medical device instructions and patient information leaflets. As an anti-counterfeiting measure, they are ideal for the 2D barcodes needed for serialisation.

For manufacturers, the benefits of using Fix-a-Form® booklet labels include:

- Clear, legible on-pack guidelines that encourage correct product use and repeat purchases.
- The reproduction of information in multiple languages, extending the reach of on-pack communication.
- The space to include 2D barcodes and other legislated information.
- The elimination of separate packaging, leaflets or labels for wide product ranges.
- Minimised packaging waste.
- Labels supplied on-reel for automatic application using standard labelling machinery, resulting in uninterrupted production lines.

Affixing to almost any package surface, Fix-a-Form® informational booklet labels offer an innovative and space-efficient way to communicate detailed product information and include legislated information without compromising shelf appeal. They are available in a virtually unlimited range of shapes and sizes that can be tailored to meet packaging requirements.

When fully implemented, serialisation will reduce theft and counterfeiting by increasing transparency and visibility throughout the supply chain. It will also increase the speed and reduce the cost of product recalls.

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