



# Case study

## Worthing & Southlands Hospitals NHS Trust – Southlands Hospital Pharmacy Production Unit

Southlands Hospital Pharmacy Production unit, part of Worthing and Southlands Hospital NHS Trust, implements GS1 bar codes to uniquely identify re-packaged and labelled medicines and improve patient safety.

### Introduction

The pharmacy production unit of Southlands Hospital, in Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex, has implemented GS1 standards for its new bar coding system to uniquely identify medicines. The process of bar coding repackaged and labelled medicines at Southlands Hospital was driven by growing demand from its customers who had implemented robotic dispensing units at their facilities. The pharmacy production unit's customers include NHS hospitals, private hospitals and community pharmacies.

Southlands Hospital repackages and labels common prescription drugs for its customers. With this service, pharmacies and dispensaries are able to dispense the drugs to patients more quickly and free up staff for patient care. Pre-packed drugs also enable out-of-hours doctors, who have no access to

pharmacies, to prescribe and dispense direct to the patient immediately after treatment or diagnosis; ensuring patients are able to start treatment without delay. With 700 product lines serving 50 customers, Southlands Hospital managed to implement their standardised bar coding system within 3 months.

### The implementation

In response to the needs of its customers, Southlands decided to implement GS1 bar codes on its repackaged and labelled medicines at their pharmacy production facility. This decision was further reinforced by the Department of Health's Coding for Success initiative which recommended the use of GS1 bar codes on all medicines used within the NHS.





*"We registered with GS1 UK in 2006 and were guided through the implementation process by their very helpful service team and referred to their literature for useful information."*

*"We also found our bar code hardware supplier through the solution provider finder on GS1 UK's website, which we found very easy to use."*

Jenny Tinson, Technical Services  
Pharmacist, Southlands Hospital.

### The process

The hospital uses EAN-13 bar codes to uniquely identify its products and manages its numbers using the GS1 number bank which lists the hospital's allocated bar codes and product descriptions online. Southlands back up the data monthly or after numbers have been allocated to its products onto an internal master database system.

Product descriptions and details linked to its unique bar code are stored in the database system. This data includes the customer code, drug name, drug form, drug strength, pack size and type of pack.

When the hospital receives a new order from a customer, a bar code is allocated to the product. The hospital's internal QC department carries out several in-process checks to ensure that the printed bar code labels are correct before the master worksheet and label is signed off. A pre-approval bar coded label is sent to the customer to check that it is readable by their robot; and to upload the information to their system in advance.

Once the customer signs off the bar coded label, a worksheet is prepared containing details of the labelling operation and the master label with the approved bar code. The worksheet is used during the packing process to ensure that the correct product details are printed on the label. The bar codes printed on the labels are compared with the worksheet's approved bar code. A hand held scanner is then used to ensure that the bar code on the label is readable before it is stuck onto the drug packaging.

Once the label is stuck onto the packaging, the internal QC department carries out a final check on the readability of the bar code and proof reads the label to ensure that the information is correct before it is delivered to the customer.

### Benefits to hospitals

Bar codes using GS1 standards enable the hospital's customers to facilitate the use of automated dispensing and ordering processes, improve stock control and match patient records to the right medication.

Southlands also benefits from an enhanced service that gives them the ability to sell to customers that use robotic dispensing units and require bar coded products. It has also improved its quality of service and introduced extra checks to a labelling process that previously had a stringent quality control system. With GS1 bar codes included on Southland's packaging, the checking process has become more efficient ensuring that the correct label has been selected for the specific packing operation.

### Conclusion

Southlands Hospital has met the current needs of its customers with a new and standardised bar coding system. The hospital has implemented the GS1 System to help its customers guarantee that patients are getting the right medication, at the right time, in the right dose, via the right route thus improving patient safety.

Patient safety is currently at the top of the agenda for the NHS following the Department of Health's decision to recommend GS1 standards. Hospitals are under increasing pressure to automate their processes in order to reduce the chance of human error and increase efficiency. GS1 UK has provided on going support to Southlands Hospital to help them get the most out of bar codes.