



The Global Language of Business

GS1 Healthcare Newsletter

# 2021 brings a renewed sense of hope and possibility

February 2021



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*Ulrike Kreysa*

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GS1 Healthcare

There is no doubt that from its beginning 2020 was an unprecedented year of challenges. Global communities of healthcare providers, manufacturers and distributors were responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. They were caring for patients 24/7, producing and distributing personal protective equipment for caregivers and essential medicines for sick patients, and developing much needed vaccines to restore the health of the world.

As we move into 2021, I feel that much of the world has regained its sense of hope and possibility, something that diminished through the battles of 2020. Of course, the fight with COVID-19 and its broad range of implications is far from over, but we see positive developments as more and more vaccines become available and increasingly more people are vaccinated.

In past years, great strides have been made in the digital transformation of the healthcare industry, enabled by the ongoing implementation of GS1 standards. Now, these standards-enabled supply chain and clinical processes are being put to the test by the growing needs of healthcare providers and their patients. Thankfully, they have been successful. Healthcare providers that have GS1 standards in place openly share how this has helped the resilience of their organisations in the world of COVID-19. Likewise, suppliers of vaccines and other necessary products look to GS1 standards to enable unique product identification to prevent counterfeit items from infiltrating the legitimate supply chain.

In 2020, our vision—the “use of global standards to help enable optimal quality and efficiency of healthcare delivery to benefit patients”—took on a renewed meaning and sense of urgency.

In 2021, we intend to remain strong in our commitment to the safety and health of patients. We will continue to work with all healthcare stakeholders to assist in the implementation of global standards. At the same time, we have pivoted slightly to ensure that we have enhanced capability to support the use of global standards to strengthen the supply chain for essential COVID-related products, including much needed vaccines.

Thank you for your partnership in these challenging times, and I look forward to working with each of you as we progress, with a renewed sense of hope and possibility, towards a “new future.”

## 2020-2021: Unprecedented year of challenges and new year of opportunities



In 2020, due to the impact of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, GS1 Healthcare reassessed and reprioritised its current strategy looking at related new needs. The drive for efficiencies in processes was reinforced, in-person conferences were changed to online, and actions were taken to ensure that the “new normal” would still produce outstanding results in a year like no other.

As we entered 2021, the horizon is becoming increasingly brighter with globally available vaccines and research on advanced treatments underway. While short-term tactical decisions will be made as 2021 unfolds, the pillars of our GS1 Healthcare strategy focused on patient safety remains unchanged—in fact, reenergised. This includes commitment to strengthen the supply

chain for all COVID-19 related products. A global communication strategy and campaign is planned to showcase how GS1 standards contribute to building [trust](#) amongst healthcare stakeholders and to strengthen the global healthcare supply chain. In 2020, the use of standards helped to create supply chain resilience and eventually prevent shortages. In 2021, we intend to communicate how GS1 standards are a critical contributor to the overall population having [trust](#) in COVID-19 vaccines and other associated products.

## Healthcare providers on the frontline of patient care

Created in 2019, the GS1 Healthcare [Clinical Advisory Committee](#) (CAC) of doctors and nurses came together for five meetings to advise about issues faced in clinical settings and how to overcome these with GS1 standards. The CAC released [The Clinical Patient Pathway](#) that details the individual touch points throughout the clinical patient journey where GS1 standards are used.

In 2020, GS1 Healthcare continued its work to establish and advance relationships with global healthcare organisations, including the [International Hospital Federation](#) (IHF) and the [International Society for Quality in Healthcare](#) (ISQua). A Memorandum of Understanding was created with IHF (April 2020) and then later in 2020 with ISQua for increased collaboration.



In 2021, we look forward to establishing relationships with the new CEOs of both IHF and ISQua. We will work with ISQua to develop a joint white paper about the role of accreditation and standards.

Last year, GS1 chaired a work group as part of IHF's post COVID-19 taskforce and hosted a session during the online IHF Conference 2020. In 2021, we intend to advance the relationship by working with IHF on at least one joint project.

[Healthcare provider webinars](#) featured successful GS1 standard implementations in healthcare provider environments. Designed to enhance knowledge, these stories were shared with the GS1 Healthcare community, ISQua for its Fellowship Programme and with the [World Continuing Education Alliance](#) (WCEA). In 2021, six more webinars are planned.

Now with more than 140 case studies, the [healthcare provider database](#) continued to grow in 2020 with 17 new case studies added, including stories about UDI implementations and medication. Statistical and analysis functionalities of the database were also completed. In 2021, we plan to create a "good practices" document on bedside scanning and primary pack identification along with a common strategy for implementing these practices.

A set of measurements to capture outcomes of healthcare provider implementations of GS1 standards was defined in 2020; work on creating a tool to capture the data for these measurements from real life implementations is now in progress. Later in 2021, two hospitals will pilot the set of measurements and provide feedback for improvements.

As planned, development efforts associated with an educational paper and interactive webinar about "GS1 in connection with VBHC" were launched in 2020 and are currently underway for completion in 2021.

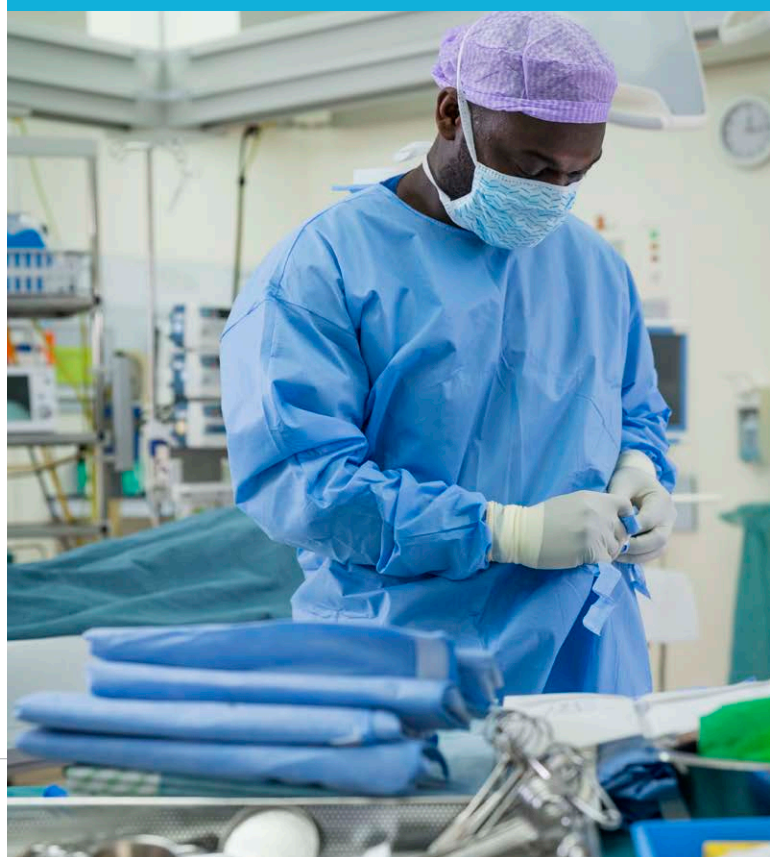
To finetune GS1 Member Organisations' (MO) knowledge of healthcare providers, a workshop was conducted at Global Forum and at regional forums, when requested. The first healthcare

provider-related e-Learning module, [GS1 standards in hospitals](#), was released in 2020 with plans to deliver a second module by the end of 2021.

The updated CEN / ISO Technical Standard 18530 for patient and caregiver identification (which details the application of the GS1 Global Service Relation Number or GSRN in this context) was approved by international standard ballot with its publication in September 2020. To help educate MOs about this standard, a webinar is planned for mid-2021.

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In 2021, we intend to take the work to engage healthcare providers to implement GS1 standards to the next level. The communication strategy and activities will aim to broaden and deepen engagement within healthcare provider environments for significant uptake of global standards.



# Accelerating the global transformation of healthcare by working with solution providers

[Solution providers](#) help to facilitate the global transformation of the healthcare industry by integrating GS1 standards into their solutions and supporting standards-based projects. The global GS1 Healthcare Solution Provider work group grew once again in 2020 by 9 new solution providers and 15 new MOs for a total of 47 solution providers and 46 GS1 MOs.

A primary focus in 2020 included improved and continuous knowledge exchanges between GS1 and solutions providers. Three webinars were conducted by solution providers for the global GS1 Healthcare community, all MOs and their members worldwide. New web pages for solution providers were provided and updated regularly with relevant videos, quotes and case studies.

A new interactive finder tool and map that identifies MOs' solution provider programmes linked to solution providers was also introduced—making “finding a solution provider” that understands GS1 standards much easier.

During 2021, four expert solution provider webinars are planned along with solution provider sponsorship programmes during each of the GS1 Healthcare Online Summits. Development of customised value propositions per solution provider category will be developed.



## Strengthening core standards throughout healthcare processes

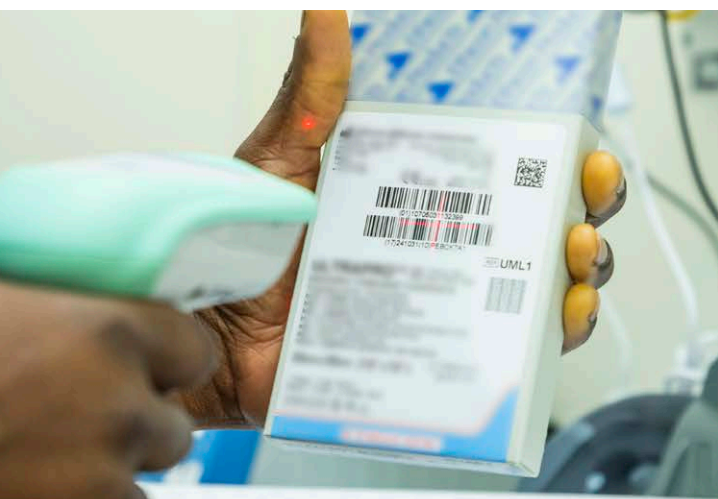
Being able to experience GS1 standards in action is key to understanding the benefit they provide. To help increase the capability of people to “see” the standards, a virtual reality app, taking the user through the experience of GS1 standards being used at the patient bedside, was launched. In 2021, an additional module to help users visualise the benefits of GS1 standards in hospital operating rooms, will be developed.

To further communicate the value of using GS1 standards during a pandemic, a GS1 library with relevant articles and MO activities will be developed in 2021 to provide this increased visibility.

A major work effort to update the [Healthcare GTIN Allocation Rules](#) was completed in 2020 along with the tools and training to help members use them. In 2021, additional training sessions are planned in various forums.

To help drive deeper and broader implementations of [GS1 identification \(AIDC\) standards](#) in healthcare environments, an assessment of existing AIDC documents was conducted in 2020. Additional tools will also be identified and developed in 2021, along with relevant updates made to existing position papers, presentations and other support materials, to further assist AIDC implementations.

Also in 2020, we continued to develop the relevant standards for application of GS1 in clinical trials.





An educational session about the clinical trials' [AIDC standard](#) was presented at GS1 Forum, an [EDI implementation guideline](#) released, and updates were made to [the GLN allocation guideline](#) to include information relevant to clinical trials.

In 2021, we will focus on training MOs about how standards work in clinical trials, and promote their use via presentations at external forums and the development of at least one case study that demonstrates the value. We will also receive pilot feedback to GS1 XML (EDI) messages for clinical trials and work to update these messages to help guide them through the final GS1 standards ratification process.

In 2021, we plan to deliver a standard for the identification of repackaged medicinal products for dispensing purposes and start the development of a guideline for the identification of laboratory samples.

Another significant initiative in 2020 included the creation of an refreshed data quality strategy aimed at improving data quality at source. A pilot with GS1 US is currently underway with a final report planned for the first half of 2021. We plan to promote the use of the data quality programme to MOs by sharing the pilot outcomes to further stimulate activity.

## Driving strategic implementation initiatives in global regulations

Our Public Policy activities in 2020 focused on ensuring that complete and real-time information about GS1 standards used in regulations was made available to the public policy community. This included facilitating regular Public Policy work team teleconferences, making improvements and updates to the Healthcare Public Policy Interactive World Map, and providing detailed information and references in the [GS1 Healthcare Public Policy Database](#). These activities will continue in 2021.

To help drive harmonised regulatory requirements for pharmaceutical traceability, training was conducted regarding the [GS1 Regulatory Roadmap on Traceability of Medicinal Products](#) that provides a global framework of medicines traceability.

GS1 Healthcare worked with the pharmaceutical industry, trade associations, GS1 MOs and regulators on the use GS1 standards in specific countries and topics. Three [position papers](#) were completed in 2020 that addressed machine-to-machine data connection for UDI, pharmaceutical traceability and pharmaceutical aggregation.

In 2021, we will focus on supporting the development of pharmaceutical traceability systems throughout the world, especially in fulfilling the recommendations related to COVID-19 vaccine labelling.

In 2020, our support of UDI systems continued to be a top priority across the globe in the US, EU, Australia,

Brazil, China, Saudi Arabia and South Korea. The GS1 UDI policy was revised and 110 GS1 MOs were trained on the UDI certification programme, which was delivered via eLearning and face-to-face sessions. Throughout the year, ongoing monthly workshops and calls for MOs offered opportunities for sharing experiences and best practices.

In the EU, work efforts centred on Global Data Synchronisation Network™ (GDSN®) mapping efforts with EUDAMED (the European UDI database). The new [EUDAMED/GDSN mapping guide](#) has been published at the beginning of 2021. The addition of new attributes to the GDSN standard via the GS1 Global Standards Management Process (GSMP) is being coordinated with EUDAMED releases. A new GDSN release of additional attributes is planned for mid-2021.

We will also work to establish and nurture relationships with regulators and healthcare stakeholders. For example, in 2020, we participated in European Medicines Agency (EMA) advisory boards on Identification of Medicinal Products (IDMP) standards and contributed to adverse event reporting at the World Health Organisation.

## Ramping up awareness of GS1 standards in Africa

In 2020, GS1 Healthcare continued to provide support and facilitate, when needed, the initiatives of the MOs that are part of the Africa Healthcare Interest Group (AHIG). Led by multiple GS1 MOs, the projects focused on involving solution providers, engaging regulatory bodies, and approaching master data and GDSN.

We also organised AHIG meetings to help drive MO communication and collaboration, and help build knowledge about GS1 standards. Online MO training about deploying GS1 standards for Ghana was delivered as well as for French-speaking African countries.

Other major initiatives and activities included being the main point of contact for standards implementation for identification of mosquito nets in sub-Saharan Africa, representing GS1 at online conferences and workshops, and supporting regulatory actions related to the traceability [Call to Action](#) signed at the 2019 GS1 Healthcare conference in Lagos.

In 2021, we plan to significantly increase awareness about the value of GS1 standards by developing

training, customised for African stakeholders, including government and donor organisations. A new [Africa-focused newsletter](#) has just been launched and marketing materials will be developed about the challenges and opportunities of implementing GS1 standards. In addition, steps will be taken to systemically introduce and train three new solution providers about GS1.



## Looking to digital technologies

Coming in 2021, an updated version of GS1 Healthcare's ONE product ONE barcode paper will emphasise the importance of having one barcode on a package for accessing supply chain and online information.

Since the QR code with a URL is becoming increasingly prevalent on packages to access digital information in healthcare, a statement is being developed about how to position the GS1 Digital Link standard and two-dimensional (2D) barcodes. Scheduled for completion in Q1 2021, this important paper will explain the role of the Digital Link standard in combination with the existing linear or 2D barcode in accessing online information.

The GS1 Innovation Board published its 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of [Trend Research 2020-2021, Navigating the next normal](#), that analyses the top trends and enabling technologies in the context of the disruptions of the

past year, especially the global pandemic. This edition contains a specific section related to healthcare, and offers recommendations to industry and GS1 on how to navigate the new reality and future.

We continued to liaise with other standards development organisations (SDOs) to strengthen awareness of GS1 as the standards for product and location identification, data capture, and information sharing in healthcare, while ensuring interoperability with other important standards used in healthcare, e.g., HL7. GS1 assumed the chair of the [Joint Initiative Council](#) in 2020, and will continue to do so in 2021. We collaborated with the other SDOs, which are part of the group to develop and launch a paper—[Joint Initiative Council: Setting the stage for the future](#)—for increased understanding about JIC and its role in healthcare standards.

## Helping to set the stage for COVID-19 vaccine delivery

In 2020, GS1 Healthcare cooperated with with the Developing Countries Vaccine Manufacturers Network (DCVMN), Gavi, the Vaccines alliance and UNICEF to raise awareness of the importance of GS1 standards in vaccine-related processes. These work efforts will continue in 2021.

GS1 Healthcare participates in the Private Sector Advisory Council's quarterly

meetings of the World Bank Group to help build traceability capabilities in developing countries as well as in meetings, seminars and training sessions for USAID and The Global Fund. In 2021, in addition to continuing our current work, we will focus efforts on establishing a relationship with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and help support this organisation's awareness of GS1 standards.

## Providing services to MOs and members around the globe

Throughout 2020, support of our MOs focused on the exchange of information, development of tools and assets, and assistance with local activities. We are working to develop a training catalogue and updated resources, for example, new presentation slides. Planned for 2021 is a new eLearning course about GS1 standards in healthcare.

We continue to work with all GS1 MOs active in healthcare, facilitating monthly Healthcare Interest Group meetings to share experiences.

Providing services and support to our members was also an essential part of our 2020 plan. We led

quarterly interactive meetings with global updates, ensured all documents were online in respective Community Rooms, and facilitated relationships between global members and GS1 MOs.

To help grow GS1 Healthcare membership, a plan was developed and work group established to drive engagement activities. To date, 27 new pharmaceutical and medical device companies have been contacted and new areas of outreach include logistics providers, dental products and generic medicines suppliers.



The banner features a blue background with a large, stylized white arrow pointing towards the top right. In the top right corner, the GS1 logo is displayed. Below the arrow, the text "20-22 April 2021" is written in white. The main title "GS1 Healthcare Online Summit" is prominently displayed in large white letters, followed by the tagline "Global Standards for Global Health" in a smaller white font. In the bottom left corner, there are three circular icons: a syringe, a person, and a circular logo with the text "GS1 Healthcare Celebrating 15 years". The background also includes a faint image of a medical vial and syringe.

GS1<sup>®</sup>

20-22 April 2021

**GS1 Healthcare Online Summit**

Global Standards for Global Health

GS1 Healthcare Celebrating 15 years

Continuing into 2021, we will work to become more efficient and provide even greater value for our global members and GS1 MOs.

In 2020, it was critical more than ever to communicate the value of GS1 standards to reach new and larger audiences, and keep our existing ones connected. In spite of facing COVID-19 related challenges, 17 healthcare providers and suppliers shared their inspirational stories of GS1 standards' implementations in the [2020-21 GS1 Healthcare Reference Book](#). Looking to the 2021, the stories in the next reference book promise to be even more inspirational as they demonstrate the value of GS1 standards during the global pandemic.

**The details about our 2021 strategic priorities are available for download [here](#)**

**For questions or comments, please contact your [GS1 Global Office Relationship Manager](#).**

## Transitioning to global GS1 Healthcare Online Summits

Due to the pandemic, the in-person GS1 Global Healthcare conferences planned in 2020 were replaced with the global GS1 Healthcare Online Summit in 17-19 November. The summit was well-attended with 582 participants from 87 countries and received an overall positive rating of 4.4 out of 5 points.

During the three-day event, presenters from around the world discussed their innovative projects focused on supply chain and traceability during our times of pandemic uncertainty.

We will continue to offer numerous events in 2021, including one global GS1 Healthcare Online Summit, 20-22 April and another later in the year.





### About GS1 Healthcare

GS1 Healthcare is a neutral and open community bringing together all related healthcare stakeholders to lead the successful development and implementation of global GS1 standards, enhancing patient safety, and operational and supply chain efficiencies.

The development and implementation of GS1 standards is led by the experts who use them: pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, group purchasing organisations, hospitals, pharmacies, logistics providers, solution providers, governmental and regulatory bodies, and trade associations. Evidence available from industry implementations shows that GS1 identification, data capture and data sharing standards in healthcare deliver tangible benefit to all stakeholders. Global members of GS1 Healthcare include more than 130 leading healthcare organisations worldwide.

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