GS1 Healthcare Newsletter

# Building on solid foundations

## March 2022

> *I know that the success of GS1 Healthcare is in its community – and every one of you contributing to ensure standards can make a difference to patients worldwide.*

**Ulrike Kreysa**
Senior Vice President
GS1 Healthcare

2021 marked a year of transition for the way in which the world managed the greatest health crisis of our time. The arrival of vaccines against COVID-19 means that defences against this deadly virus have been greatly strengthened over the past 12 months.

The pandemic is not yet over. As the World Health Organization and other international bodies have emphasised, no one is safe from COVID-19 until everyone is safe. Global equity of access to vaccine doses, to emerging COVID treatments, and to personal protective equipment is critical.

This emphasises how important clear and reliable communication and interoperability between healthcare organisations and systems is. Supporting such interoperability is, of course, one of GS1 Healthcare's missions.

In more than 75 countries, GS1 standard barcodes play an essential role in ensuring information about healthcare items is consistently captured and shared. As we have continued to emphasise this year, having just one barcode on such products – and in a paper we explained why this should be a GS1 DataMatrix barcode – supports consistent identification of items, increases efficiency, and improves patient safety.

Our central belief that safety and efficiency starts with a simple scan is as strong as ever, but at the same time GS1 Healthcare is changing. After 17 years leading the organisation, and having had the privilege of working alongside so many of you who are dedicated to improving healthcare, I have taken the decision to retire. From 29 April 2022 onwards, my colleague Géraldine Lissalde-Bonnet will take overall responsibility for GS1 Healthcare. While I will be sad to leave GS1 Healthcare, I know Géraldine will bring her usual professionalism, passion and knowledge to this new role, and together with the team, continue the successful work into the future.

While GS1 Healthcare may look a little different, much remains unchanged. In 2022, we will continue the programmes and activities we know are valued by the wide range of partners we work with – a survey last year showed 97% of our Global Members are satisfied or very satisfied with the support we offer, with particularly strong appreciation for our healthcare public policy activities, the expertise provided by our team about GS1 standards, and the strength of our powerful global community. Naturally, then, all of those will remain a key theme of our work in the coming months.

We held two very successful online summits in 2021, but I am delighted to announce that this year we will be holding our first hybrid event. The Global GS1 Healthcare Conference will take place from Tuesday 15 November to Thursday 17 November 2022 in Paris, with delegates able to join us either in person or virtually online.

Following the success of last year's GS1 Healthcare Reference Book, our 2022-23 edition will be published again this year, giving insights into how healthcare organisations around the world have used GS1 standards and the benefits and improvements they experienced.

Our healthcare public policy efforts will remain a key focus. 2021 saw us providing information to regulators developing consistent requirements for tracing pharmaceutical products and combatting the serious issue of medication counterfeiting. We continued to support global efforts relating to Unique Device Identification, achieving Issuing Agency status in Singapore.

In 2022, our healthcare global public policy work group will again meet regularly and we will continue to update our Healthcare Public Policy Database – which as of late 2021 has a new design and improved features. The database gives the GS1 Healthcare Global Community and our Member Organisations insight into the latest regulatory requirements, agreements and requests related to healthcare product identification, product catalogues and traceability worldwide.

At the same time as continuing these and other key activities, we will spend 2022 advancing five key strategic priorities. We see these as central to achieving our goals. In this newsletter you can learn more about each one.

If you have any questions about the work of GS1 Healthcare, please contact your GS1 Healthcare relationship manager, or any member of the global GS1 Healthcare team.

While I will no longer be beside you in working towards these goals, rest assured I will remain as passionate as ever about the work of GS1 Healthcare. From the very first industry meeting in Princeton in 2005, to the challenges COVID has brought, I will also always be grateful for the support you gave me as I led this organisation. I know that the success of GS1 Healthcare is in its community – and every one of you contributing to ensure standards can make a difference to patients worldwide. My most sincere thanks to all of you.

Kind regards,

**Ulrike**

# OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE COMING YEAR… AND THE PROGRESS WE'VE ALREADY MADE

## 1. Position ourselves as a central partner in the digital transformation of healthcare

The pandemic has underlined and increased the importance of all parts of the healthcare system being able to communicate quickly and effectively, with a shared language. It's shown the need for information to flow between countries and across borders and to be shared with patients, enabling citizens to take care of their own health – whether through vaccine passports or increasing use of wearable technology.

We have also seen the importance of data and information being able to flow quickly within and beyond the life sciences industry; its dedicated workforce having brought us vaccines against COVID-19 within a year of the virus's discovery with unprecedented speed and collaboration.

In the coming 12 months, we will therefore continue our work to become an ever-more central partner in the digital transformation of healthcare. We will be developing an engagement plan to guide our work, offering educational opportunities which explore the role GS1 standards play in digital health, and will keep working with providers of electronic patient record systems to make sure their solutions support our standards. We'll also continue to promote how scanning a GS1 barcode can be used to give access to digital information, and share the message that only one such code should ever be needed on a healthcare product.

## In 2021, we:

- **Continued our role as chair of the Joint Initiative Council for Global Health Informatics Standardization (JIC), working with colleagues from other standards organisations to ensure consistent standards mean healthcare information can be easily and efficiently shared.** During GS1's time as chair we've helped deliver three JIC Open Forums, bringing together people from around the world to explore how healthcare data can be consistently standardised.

- **Worked with Deloitte to explore how global standards can contribute to an efficient distribution and administration of the COVID-19 vaccines globally.** The resulting **discussion paper** explored how to build trust in the global supply chain for COVID-19 vaccines and was supported with three **Executive Dialogues**, bringing together key stakeholders in the vaccine supply chain.

- **Worked with clinical trials supply chain colleagues to develop and test standards for use in this area.** That includes cooperating with industry to create consistent standards for clinical trials supply chain communication.

- **Started developing standards for identification of laboratory samples.** This will make it easier for information about diagnoses and results to flow through healthcare systems.

- **Started work on more accurately identifying repackaged medicinal products.** GS1 barcodes are consistently used on packaged medications, but when those medications are decanted into a personalised dose box or package for an individual, there has not traditionally been a standardised barcode used. We are working to change that, ensuring that standardised barcode-based medication information is fully available even in these situations, and that that important, patient related information can be seamlessly captured.

- **Worked with GS1 Member Organisations to explore how GS1 standards can and have made a difference to the strength of the supply chain during COVID.** COVID has presented supply chain challenges in many health systems. We have worked with our partners to explore how GS1 standards can make a difference in overcoming such difficulties.

- **Updated the GS1 Healthcare Barcode Scanner app.** This app is freely available on the Google Play Store and on Apple's App Store. It enables users to check the encoding of GS1 barcodes, survey locations to determine the percentage of products carrying GS1 barcodes, and now has a DigitalLink demonstration function. This means users can demonstrate how scanning a GS1 barcode can bring up information relating to the item on which it appears – a patient information leaflet for a medication, for instance.

## 2. Support healthcare systems in Africa and other emerging markets

At GS1 Healthcare, we believe all healthcare systems should benefit from the traceability, visibility and efficiency that consistent scanning of standardised barcodes and sharing of complete, accurate supply chain information brings.

This is why we are working hard with global financing and donor organisations, colleagues in Africa and other emerging markets to ensure GS1 standards are widely used in healthcare, for the benefit of all. In 2022, we will continue engaging with GS1 Member Organisations, regulatory authorities, solution providers and others in emerging markets to support the use of our standards as healthcare systems evolve. With development partners, we'll particularly focus on increasing support for Francophone countries – including by participating in French-language events.

### In 2021, we:

- **Held a session dedicated to Africa at our November GS1 Healthcare Online Summit. The Summit** centred on global standards for global health and attracted more than 700 delegates from 85 countries.

- **Introduced even more means of connecting with our colleagues in Africa.** We launched an **Africa-specific newsletter**, a customised e-learning module for the continent, and are supporting solution providers in Africa to learn more about GS1.

- **Were delighted to see two further African nations advance plans for traceability strategies.** Botswana's Ministry of Health and Wellness has released a traceability vision and strategy document, detailing an intention to have a regulatory framework for a national traceability system in place in 2022/23. In Zambia, meanwhile, draft regulatory requirements for traceability based on GS1 standards were released for public consultation in October 2021.

### In 2021, we:

- **Partnered with a number of international organisations on traceability of COVID-19 vaccines.** We worked with UNICEF; Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; and with the Developing Countries Vaccine Manufactures Network (DCVMN) on implementation of GS1 standards as they relate to COVID vaccines.

- **Attended meetings of the World Bank Global Steering Committee Private Advisory Council.** We specifically contributed to efforts to build traceability capabilities in developing countries.

- **Gave GS1 training to staff of the United Nations Development Programme.** In the past year, we've also built new connections with the UN's World Food Programme.

- **Coordinated an IMPACTT (Importation and Customs Clearance Together) group on medicines and medical equipment importation during disease outbreak.** This group is developing guidelines for humanitarian operators on medicine importation.

## 3. Collaborate with a greater range of international organisations

We know that we can't reach our goal of transforming the safety and efficiency of healthcare without support from, and collaboration with, a wide range of partners. That includes international organisations, not least governmental and non-profit bodies such as development partners and the World Health Organization.

Over the next 12 months, we intend to deepen – and where appropriate formalise – our existing collaboration with these organisations. We'll continue to support these partners on activities through which they implement traceability and the use of GS1 standards, such as UNICEF's Global Trust Repository. At the same time, we will seek to broaden the range of organisations with which we partner.

## 4. Support unique device identification in healthcare

Quality and safety in healthcare relies on the accurate, robust data that can be provided by consistent use of GS1 standards, including application of Unique Device Identification (UDI).

In the coming 12 months, we will continue working with partners to help improve the quality of data in healthcare. That includes offering education for GS1 users, GS1 Member Organisations, regulators, healthcare providers about the application of GS1 standards for UDI. We will maintain our status as an UDI Issuing Agency in all countries which currently have UDI regulations, and gain this status in countries developing such regulations.

## In 2021, we:

- **Ensured GS1 had been accredited, or re-accredited, as an issue agency of UDI in relevant countries.** We were particularly pleased to achieve accreditation as a UDI Issuing Agency in Singapore.

- **Kept up to date with, and supported development of, additional UDI regulations.** We're part of discussions on this in countries including Australia, Brazil, China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and in the European Union.

- **Supported the Global Harmonisation Working Party's (GHWP) UDI activities.** We are a liaison member of this important organisation, which seeks to study and recommend ways to harmonise medical device regulations.

- **Helped Member Organisations to implement GS1's updated UDI policy.** We prepared and delivered extensive training relating to the new policy as well as creating a range of implementation support tools.

- **Participated in a range of activities related to the European UDI implementation.** including participation in specific European Commission Task Forces, drove standards development activities to enhance our standards to meet EU UDI needs, and supported discussions related to UDI data sharing in Europe.

# Your opportunity to guide the direction of GS1 Healthcare

The **GS1 Healthcare Leadership Team elections** occur in April – June each year with the newly elected Leadership Team taking effect on 1st July.  A formal call for nominations will be sent in mid-April 2022. To find out more about GS1 Healthcare Leadership Team participation refer to our **GS1 Healthcare Governance Charter**.

## 5. Forge even stronger connections with Healthcare Providers

We know that consistent scanning of GS1 barcodes in healthcare settings, and sharing relevant data, improves efficiency and safety. But we also know that moving to implementation of those sorts of processes can be daunting. That's why we are dedicated to understanding how we can help.

We want to support the development of skills, by understanding what is needed and provide related educational content and events. That's because we know that we must engage even more closely with healthcare providers if our vision of global traceability and visibility in healthcare is to be achieved.

Our Global GS1 Healthcare Conference, taking place in November in Paris, will be an important part of our efforts here. It will sit alongside the likes of webinars and online training held throughout the year.

## Save the date for our 2022 conference

**Join us virtually or in person for our 2022 Global GS1 Healthcare Conference. It takes place from Tuesday 15 November to Thursday 17 November 2022 at the Pullman Paris Centre Bercy, with some sessions simultaneously broadcast online. More information coming soon!**

### In 2021, we:

- **Expanded our GS1 Healthcare Clinical Advisory Committee.** This group of thought leaders and early adopters of GS1 standards in healthcare now includes 11 **clinicians from healthcare** systems across the world. Together they help us make sure that everything we do helps those who are delivering care.

- **Engaged with international hospital organisations to share how standards in healthcare can improve safety and quality of care.** We continued our collaboration with organisations such as the International Society for Quality in Healthcare (ISQua), and the International Hospital Federation (IHF). We published a **joint white paper** with ISQua discussing how the use of barcode technology can make a difference to patient safety in the post-COVID era. We participated in sessions at the annual conference of the IHF.

- **Provided a range of educational opportunities for healthcare providers and members.** This included **six webinars** which showcased how implementation of GS1 standards makes a difference to healthcare providers, and all content was shared with both the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua) and the World Continuing Education Alliance (WCEA). We offered training at regional forums, helping us build connections with Member Organisations, and developed a training curriculum about GS1 in healthcare.

- **Showcased the work being done by solution providers.** A series of four webinars gave examples of how vendors are using GS1 standards and barcode scanning for their healthcare solutions. We also regularly updated our **solution providers web page** and our **Finder tool** which makes it possible to search for our partners over the world.

- **Added new case studies to our Healthcare Provider Database.** This database offers examples of hospital implementations on which others can draw when implementing GS1 standards in the healthcare provider setting.

## 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.

Follow us on Twitter: @GS1Healthcare

View the GS1 Healthcare website