Column: Right Product, Right Patient, Right Time
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Total Visibility Project will bring efficiency and accuracy to the supply chain

The Healthcare Supply Chain Association (HSCA), led by its Committee for Healthcare eStandards (CHeS) and working hand-in-hand with GS1 US, recently announced an important new industry best practice that will help bring greater efficiency to the healthcare supply chain.

Dubbed the Total Visibility Project, this initiative will also create greater transparency and improve access to accurate product information for providers at both the procurement and clinical level. Simply put, the Total Visibility Project will help ensure that the right product gets to the right patient at the right time.

The GDSN

To provide healthcare trading partners access to specific product information, HSCA members' hospitals are increasingly engaging in data synchronization through their Global Data Synchronization Network (GDSN). The GDSN is an automated, standards-based global environment for the electronic transfer of standardized product information between trading partners. The GDSN helps to enable secure, continuous data synchronization over time.

To advance data synchronization and simplify the publication of product attributes, HSCA has identified the Minimum Product Attributes that all suppliers, manufacturers and GPOs providing data to the GDSN may use to fulfill HSCA member attribute requirements. With a one-time initial publication of these attributes, suppliers will know that all hospital/provider members of a GPO will have immediate access to product data.

For product suppliers and manufacturers, this helps achieve total visibility of these product attributes in the healthcare supply chain. Sharing product information via the GDSN will significantly reduce errors, duplicative labor efforts, and other inefficiencies among trading partners. Participation in this initiative will be beneficial to GPOs, healthcare providers, clinicians, and patients.

The benefits of sharing product information through the GDSN include:

- Useful and accurate product data information available quickly and from a reliable source.
- Timely product data updates.
- Reduction in the number of administrative touches, time, and errors.
- Increased speed of new product introduction.

Beginning the process

Here are the necessary steps to begin the data synchronization process with GPOs:

1.) Subscribe to a Certified GDSN Data Pool.
2.) Complete and submit a GPO Trading Partner Information Form for each GPO with whom you do business. This step should be completed by Jan. 30, 2015.
3.) Use the Minimum Product Attributes List to ensure Initial Synchronization. Review each GPO's Data Synchronization Implementation Guide for additional requested or optional data. With the initial publication of the Minimum Product Attributes, all subscribing trading partners will receive all additions and updates.
4.) Review the product information you plan to load into GDSN. Validate and cleanse data prior to publishing. If needed, seek the advice of industry experts on data quality.
5.) GPOs will create GDSN subscriptions for your Information Provider GLN and confirm readiness to accept initial publications.
6.) Publish product information as "Initial Load" to the Recipient GLN for each GPO with whom you do business.
7.) Send an email notifying each GPO when initial publications have been sent to ensure data has been received. If it has not, the GPOs will initiate error checking to correct issues.
8.) After Initial Loads are complete, continue to submit all modifications/corrections through GDSN. New items should be published as "New."

The Minimum Product Attributes list required for Total Visibility of product data can be found at www.supplychainassociation.org. Individual HSCA members will also be alerting their partners about this development shortly.

During this period of tremendous change, we are all striving to improve the healthcare supply chain, and this development is one more step in that direction. GPOs will monitor and encourage participation in this effort from our supply chain partners. If you have questions on this initiative, the synchronization process or the Minimum Product Attributes required for Total Visibility, feel free to reach out to any of the participating GPOs. For technical questions, contact your GDSN Certified Data Pool.

GPOs are leading the way toward improving the accuracy and accessibility of product information available to the supply chain. We hope you join us!