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contact | site map | search | hints | --Quick Links--

Businesses | Products | Conditions

- ▶ **Media Relations**
 - [Contact Info](#)
 - [Media Kit](#)
 - News Releases**
 - [Work/Life Media Kit](#)
 - [Together Rx Information](#)

▶ [Investor Relations](#)

▶ [Rankings, Ratings and Awards](#)

▶ [Events & Conferences](#)

news & media
Press Release

Search the releases for:

 2003

Business press releases: [2003](#), [2002](#) and [2001](#).

Press releases: [2003](#), [2002](#) and [2001](#).

ABBOTT LABORATORIES ANNOUNCES INITIATIVE TO HELP REDUCE THE RISK OF MEDICATION ERRORS IN HOSPITALS, PLEDGES TO BAR CODE ITS INJECTABLE PHARMACEUTICALS AND IV SOLUTIONS

—COMPANY ADVANCES COMMITMENT TO PATIENT SAFETY—

Abbott Park, Illinois, July 24, 2002 — Abbott Laboratories today pledged to affix unit-of-use bar codes to all of its hospital injectable pharmaceuticals and IV solutions product lines by early 2003, as part of a comprehensive, industry-leading initiative to help reduce medication errors and enhance patient safety in hospitals. Abbott already has bar coded about 45 percent of its more than 1,000 injectable pharmaceuticals and IV solutions products and projects it will have 70 percent of these products bar coded by the end of the year.

A 1999 Institute of Medicine report, "*To Err is Human*," said medical errors contribute to as many as 98,000 deaths in the United States each year. Studies have shown that supermarket-style bar codes can help significantly reduce the risks associated with one type of medical error, medication errors, which involve the improper dosing and/or administration of drugs.

Bar coding systems can scan a patient's wristband, the nurse's ID badge and

the drug to be administered — and then match them with a computerized list, cross-checking what health care professionals call the "five rights": right patient, right drug, right dose, right route of administration, and right time. According to independent hospital studies, the use of bar coding in a hospital setting can potentially reduce medication errors by at least 50 percent.

Abbott's move is especially noteworthy on two fronts. First, administration by injection is the most frequently used drug-delivery method in hospitals — being used about 75 percent of the time. And, second, as the leading supplier of injectable pharmaceuticals and infusion therapy products (IV solutions/fluids/electronic pumps) to the U.S. hospital market, the reach of Abbott's bar coding initiative should have a positive, significant impact in helping to reduce medication errors and enhance patient safety at the hospital bedside.

Approximately one-quarter of Abbott's injectables and IV solutions will use a new technology — Reduced Space Symbology® (RSS) — which allows for a miniaturized bar code to be applied to single-unit containers as small as a pen cap. Previous technologies did not allow for smaller or odd-shaped containers to be effectively bar coded.

"Abbott's actions are a major step forward for the health care industry — and, most importantly, a vital victory for millions of hospital patients," said Michael R. Cohen, president of the Institute for Safe Medication Practices and author of the book, Medication Errors. "Abbott's work in testing and now implementing RSS technology will significantly enhance patient safety, and spark additional advances."

Abbott is the first company to introduce RSS bar code technology commercially on its injectable pharmaceuticals and IV products. Abbott has worked for several years on this initiative — most notably through its role in partnering with the Uniform Code Council (UCC) to test the effectiveness of RSS in a hospital setting.

Michael Di Yeso, chief operating officer of the Uniform Code Council, stated, "Reduced Space Symbology is a breakthrough bar code solution that will improve the identification of small health care items and bring greater speed, accuracy, and efficiency to the business processes that support patient care. RSS should serve as a strong tool to help Abbott support its focus on patient safety."

"Bar coding is the latest example of Abbott's commitment to enhancing patient safety through continued innovation in products, programs and processes," said Christopher B. Begley, senior vice president, Hospital Products, Abbott Laboratories. "Moving forward, Abbott will continue to deliver integrated product solutions to the hospital to help drive the continued reduction of medical errors."

For more than a decade, Abbott has taken a proactive approach to improving patient and health care worker safety. Abbott pioneered the availability of premixed solutions and prefilled syringes to minimize mixing and handling errors, and has been at the forefront of providing products that protect against needlestick injuries. Recently, Abbott launched a needlestick prevention Web site, www.abbottnps.com, that provides health care providers with information on current needlestick prevention legislation as well as educational information about preventing needlestick injuries. Abbott also has a long-running label enhancement program, and was the first company to print on the backside of IV containers, allowing clinicians to see critical information on both sides of the container. Through continued funding and support, Abbott has made it possible for hundreds of health care professionals to complete continuing medical education programs on the subject of medication error reduction.

Abbott Laboratories is a global, broad-based health care company devoted to the discovery, development, manufacture and marketing of pharmaceuticals, nutritionals, and medical products, including devices and diagnostics. The company employs approximately 70,000 people and markets its products in more than 130 countries.

Reduced Space Symbolology is a registered trademark of Uniform Code Council, Inc.

[Back to Top](#)



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