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ABBOTT LABORATORIES COMPLETES INITIATIVE TO BAR CODE 100 PERCENT OF ITS HOSPITAL INJECTABLE PHARMACEUTICALS AND IV SOLUTIONS

— INDUSTRY-LEADING INITIATIVE INCLUDES MORE THAN 1,000 PRODUCTS AND ALIGNS WITH FDA'S RECENTLY PROPOSED GUIDANCE —

Abbott Park, Illinois, March 27, 2003 — Abbott Laboratories announced today that it has completed its initiative to affix unit-of-use bar codes to 100 percent of its hospital injectable pharmaceuticals and IV solutions. The achievement, which encompasses more than 1,000 products, is part of Abbott's comprehensive, industry-leading initiative to help reduce medication errors and enhance patient safety in hospitals.

In addition to the breadth of products, two other factors underscore the positive and significant impact Abbott's action should make at the hospital bedside. First, administration by injection is the most frequently used drug-delivery method in hospitals. Second, Abbott is the leading supplier of injectable pharmaceuticals and infusion therapy products to the U.S. hospital market.

Abbott has worked for several years on this initiative and announced its commitment last July, in advance of U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) hearings about the possibility of requiring bar codes on pharmaceutical products. At that time, Abbott had already bar coded about 45 percent of its expansive hospital injectable pharmaceuticals and IV solutions portfolio. Additionally, virtually all of Abbott's oral pharmaceuticals distributed in bottles in the United States already include bar codes. Throughout the past year, Abbott also has been working to develop bar coding technology across hospital unit-dose packaging of these oral medications. Abbott's program is consistent with the preliminary guidance issued in the FDA's March 13 proposed rule to require bar code labeling on all prescription and some over-the-counter drugs and vaccines.

"Preventing medication errors is a critical part of ensuring patient safety and improving the quality of medical care in this country," said Tommy G. Thompson, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Bar code initiatives, such as the one recently completed by Abbott, are exactly what the FDA's proposed rule is designed to achieve. I congratulate them on their efforts."

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.

A 1999 Institute of Medicine report, "*To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System*," said medical errors contribute to as many as 98,000 deaths in the United States each year – including 7,000 attributed to medication errors. The report also noted that medication errors account for one out of every 131 outpatient deaths, and one out of every 854 inpatient deaths.

Studies have shown that bar codes can dramatically reduce the risks associated with one type of medical error, medication errors, which involve the improper dosing and/or administration of drugs. For example, one New Hampshire hospital reduced its medication error rate by 80 percent after it adopted a bar coding program. A medical center in Colorado lowered its medication error rate by 71 percent.

"Abbott's completion of its bar code effort is a triumph for millions of hospital patients – and should have a significant impact at the hospital bedside," said James C. McAllister III, M.S., director of pharmacy, University of North Carolina (UNC) Hospitals and Clinics, and assistant dean for clinical affairs, UNC School of Pharmacy. "While other pharmaceutical companies have followed Abbott's lead in implementing bar code technology, the breadth of Abbott's

accomplishment stands alone."

Also of note, about one-quarter of Abbott's hospital injectables and IV solutions 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 is the first company to introduce RSS bar code technology commercially on its hospital injectable pharmaceuticals and IV solutions.

"We're pleased to have completed our bar code initiative, which underscores 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. "This accomplishment is a key component to Abbott's larger medication management strategy."

Recently, Abbott launched the LifeCare® PCA3 Infusion System, a new patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) device – the first of its kind to incorporate a built-in bar code reader to identify and verify drug and dose concentrations automatically. This advance adds to Abbott's long list of proactive approaches 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. Last year, Abbott launched a needlestick prevention Web site, www.abbottnps.com, that offers health care providers background 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 Symbology is a registered trademark of Uniform Code Council, Inc.

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