

What the Deloitte report on Securing trust in the global supply chain of vaccines means for Australian Healthcare.

WORDS BY CATHERINE KOETZ, INDUSTRY MANAGER - GS1 AUSTRALIA



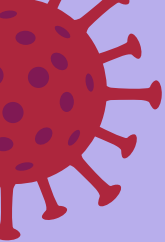
It is now over two years since the COVID pandemic erupted and there is still no reliable, transparent way to verify where vaccines are in many countries, where they came from, and whether the supply is meeting demand. This problem could also be said to exist across much of healthcare and the products that are needed to make it work efficiently and safely. Certainly, the message around procuring enough (but not too much) quality products from validated sources and maintaining surety within the supply chain resonates locally.

Is there a single silver bullet to the issue? The short answer is no, however, the new Deloitte report “Securing trust in the global supply chain of COVID-19 vaccines”, calls for international healthcare organisations to promote global standards, to ensure citizens around the world have a speedy, equal, and

secure access to COVID-19 vaccines. This message can also be expanded to the broader healthcare product supply chain.

This latest report is a reflection of the progress made since its publishing in 2020. Learnings about the complexity of the four critical success factors for organisations and governments to secure public trust. There has been progress on all these fronts, although it has been uneven.

Now the world is focussing on safety and traceability throughout the supply chain. The report discusses the greater need for a global standard of serialisation at manufacturing to ensure authenticity, safe storage, delivery and administration worldwide. This recommendation is widely supported but for Australia, consideration certainly needs to be given to



the technology and process gaps that exist within the system and the provider community.

Working in collaboration with GS1, it was determined that implementing global standards would rectify these issues and ensure product integrity and trust in the global supply chain of vaccines.

Requiring serialisation of vaccines would allow for more efficient and accurate traceability of vaccine administration and help fight fake and counterfeit vaccines. Some of the core lessons from this, if we extrapolate more broadly, are that these changes would make it easier to identify bottlenecks and recognise where products are being wasted. In a health system that struggles to have sufficient funding to meet increasing needs, efficiency gains, business intelligence and reductions in unnecessary waste can only be positive.

More than 75 countries are requiring or accepting the GS1 DataMatrix, a 2D barcode recommended by healthcare stakeholders that includes critical data such as expiration dates and lot numbers, helping reduce errors and enabling traceability of medical products. Australia is one of the countries that has adopted this simple technology and the utilisation of standards-based identification within our regulations. We also have some centres of excellence for the implementation of other global identification to help support our supply chains, improved visibility and clinical interactions.

The learnings throughout the COVID pandemic can be crucial to better prepare the world for future health crises – and this is certainly true for Australian Healthcare where supply chains struggled to keep pace and gaps in processes and technology were highlighted.

The final message from Deloitte is that it is essential that all stakeholders in the supply chain implement global standards to ensure trusted healthcare delivery during the COVID pandemic and beyond. This is certainly a point for our health system to consider as we push into the future.

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