

E-Pedigree Product for Drugmakers

Startup SupplyScape has teamed with Sun Microsystems to offer an EPC application for tracking the history of pharmaceutical drugs.

March 5, 2004—[SupplyScape](#), a Cambridge, Mass.-based developer of RFID applications to fight product counterfeiting and diversion, has teamed up with [Sun Microsystems](#) to create an application that uses Electronic Product Code (EPC) technology to create an electronic pedigree for pharmaceutical drugs. An electronic pedigree is a secure record documenting that a drug was manufactured and distributed under safe and secure conditions. The aim is to try to reduce the introduction of counterfeit drugs into the legitimate pharmaceutical supply chain using EPC tags. By sealing a bottle at the manufacturing plant, affixing a tag with a unique EPC and using RFID readers to track it to the wholesaler and eventually the pharmacy, the manufacture, wholesaler and pharmacy can ensure that the product is genuine.

Florida and Nevada have passed laws in the United States requiring pedigrees. Italy has passed one of the strictest laws in Europe. And the U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently issued a report recommending the use of RFID tags to combat the counterfeiting of pharmaceutical drugs (see [FDA Endorses RFID Technology](#)).

SupplyScape integrated its Electronic Pedigree with Sun's EPC Event Manager, a middleware product that takes data from RFID readers, filters out redundant reads and passes on "event" data—information about the movement of product, say—to an application.

The pedigree application gathers and stores a multitude of information about drug shipments, including product name, National Drug Code number, lot number, EPC and purchase order under which it was shipped.

The system can be tailored to capture specific information required by laws in different states or countries. For instance, Florida law requires companies to capture and store the name of the person who signed to receive the product at the pharmacy.

Companies using SupplyScape Electronic Pedigree can also configure business rules based on their own needs or on requirements established by their customers. So the software can be set up to send an alert when a particular shipment contains drugs that will expire within three months, or when a company mistakenly uses a secondary wholesaler to send drugs to a pharmacy that accepts drugs only from a primary wholesaler.

Shabbir Dahod, president and CEO of SupplyScape, says that the main focus of the application is creating electronic pedigrees, but it is also designed to deliver a return on investment by helping companies to automate common tasks, such as checking to ensure that a shipment contains all the drugs that were ordered and authenticating the receipt of the shipment.

The product is aimed at pharmaceutical manufacturers, wholesale distributors and pharmacies. In the short term, SupplyScape will focus on the drugmakers because they have to put tags on products to comply with mandates from Wal-Mart and the U.S. Department of Defense and need to offset the cost of the tag. Dahod says the product should deliver a quick return on investment. One way is by enabling manufacturers to

confirm that a pharmacy did, in fact, sell the volume of a product required to receive incentives in the form of reimbursements.

"Pharmaceutical companies very often provide incentives [to pharmacies] based on volume," he says. "They can't really verify volume today, but with EPC you can clearly identify which products were filled and monitor reimbursements."

Another big issue is the recall of products. Today, recalls are done by lot numbers, and often, large batches of products have to be recalled to ensure that the problem drugs are not sold. But in the future, recalls could be focused on a specific smaller range of EPCs, potentially saving drugmakers millions of dollars.

The SupplyScape Electronic Pedigree application is expected to be available in the second quarter of 2004. Pricing has not been set.

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