

Document name	Request for Information: Phased implementation of GTIN-14 Datamatrix barcodes
Purpose	Request for comment and information on proposed inclusion of GTIN-14 Datamatrix barcodes for the special conditions of contract for pharmaceuticals

1. Introduction

Over the past four years, the National Department of Health (NDOH) has implemented a number of supply chain reforms aimed at improving the efficiency and agility of the distribution of medicines. These reforms have incorporated international best practice and global standards to promote efficiency, reliability, and effectiveness within the medicine supply chain.

In accordance with global best practice, NDOH is considering implementing a product identification, labelling, and data exchange requirement including GTIN-14 Datamatrix barcode requirements in the special conditions of contract applicable to contracts for pharmaceuticals. The Global Trade Item Number™ (GTIN™) Datamatrix barcode is used for the unique identification of trade items worldwide and leverages existing global standards. The requirement seeks to enable end-to-end data visibility, identify and implement supply chain efficiencies, ensure supply chain security and improve patient safety.

The phasing in of GTIN-14 Datamatrix barcodes aim to improve transparency and increase efficiencies across the entire supply chain of medical products for NDOH, provincial departments of health, manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, providers, and patients. It will also ensure standardisation thereby increasing the competitiveness of local manufacturers on the international level. This document serves as a request for information and comment regarding implementation of GTIN-14 Datamatrix barcodes.

2. Background

Patient safety and the security of supply of medicines are of paramount importance within the health sector. To this end, it is important that mechanisms are explored and implemented to assist in satisfying these requirements. There is thus a need to be able to track and trace health products through the supply chain, and provide assurance that the product being used or consumed by the patient is indeed the genuine product.

According to Interpol International on a global level, there is a "*Significant increase in the manufacture, trade and distribution of counterfeit, stolen and illicit medicines and medical devices. Patients across the world put their health, even life, at risk by unknowingly consuming fake drugs or genuine drugs that have been doctored, badly stored or that have expired*".¹ Pharmaceutical crime involves the manufacture, trade and distribution of fake, stolen or illicit medicines and medical devices. It encompasses the counterfeiting and falsification of medical products, their packaging and associated documentation, as well as

¹ <https://www.interpol.int/Crime-areas/Pharmaceutical-crime/Pharmaceutical-crime>