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**HIGPA HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR GLOBAL STANDARDS IN HEALTHCARE SUPPLY CHAIN
IN LETTER TO U.S. HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COORDINATOR**

*Association for Healthcare Resource & Materials Management (AHRMM) Joins HIGPA
in Call for Increased Patient Safety and Efficiency in Healthcare Supply Chain*

Washington, D.C. (July 21, 2010) – The Health Industry Group Purchasing Association (HIGPA) and the Association for Healthcare Resource & Materials Management (AHRMM) of the American Hospital Association, today announced that the groups have sent a letter to Dr. David Blumenthal, National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, on the critical need to integrate global standards and electronic medical records into the healthcare supply chain.

“Today, manufacturers, wholesalers/distributors, suppliers, group purchasing organizations, hospitals, and physicians each record and track product information differently, opening the flood gates for medical errors that severely impact patient safety and the quality of care,” said HIGPA President Curtis Rooney and AHRMM Executive Director Deborah Sprindzunas in the letter. “Without data standards in this area, it is virtually impossible to efficiently recall devices and other supplies that can lead to grave injury and even death.”

To ensure the highest quality of patient care and to help streamline the healthcare supply chain, HIGPA has partnered with AHRMM and GS1 Healthcare US to encourage adoption of GS1 Global Location Number (GLN) or organizational identification, and the Global Trade Identification Number (GTIN) throughout the healthcare industry.

The full text of the letter to Coordinator Blumenthal, states:

Dear Dr. Blumenthal,

On behalf of the Health Industry Group Purchasing Association (HIGPA) and the Association for Healthcare Resource & Materials Management (AHRMM) of the American Hospital Association, we are writing to inform you about an important initiative underway that utilizes health information technology and data standards and will result in increased patient safety and gain significant efficiencies in the healthcare supply chain. We want to make you aware of this initiative, as it has significant relevance to clinical care and electronic health records (EHRs).

Today, manufacturers, wholesalers/distributors, suppliers, group purchasing organizations, hospitals, and physicians each record and track product information differently, opening the flood gates for medical errors that severely impact patient safety and the quality of care. Without data standards in this area,

it is virtually impossible to efficiently recall devices and other supplies and that can lead to grave injury and even death.

HIGPA, AHRMM, and GS1 Healthcare US work closely together to encourage the adoption throughout the healthcare industry of the GS1 Global Location Number (GLN) for organizational identification (by the end of year 2010) and Global Trade Identification Number (GTIN) for product identification (by the end of year 2012). The FDA is currently working on regulations that will create standards for medical device identifiers.

Adopting these standards will ensure that medical products, services, and locations all have unique identifiers. The resulting supply chain improvement will translate into the delivery of improved clinical services, creating a tracking system for health care products and devices that will be traceable from “product to patient.”

It is a matter of great importance that these standards be supported by the EHR. Care will only be improved if this is the case. For instance, if EHRs are able to support the use of product identifiers, then recalls will be undertaken with greater ease, and physicians and patients will be informed immediately.

We are interested to learn how your office may support these standards and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your staff. Our organizations would be pleased to provide additional information and to work with you to ensure investments in the EHR will incorporate these important patient safety requirements. GS1 Standards ensure the right product for the right patient, at the right time, through the right route, and in the right dose!

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Curtis Rooney
HIGPA

Deborah Sprindzunas
AHRMM/AHA

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About HIGPA

The Health Industry Group Purchasing Association (HIGPA) is a broad-based trade association that represents 16 group purchasing organizations, including for-profit and not-for-profit corporations, purchasing groups, associations, multi-hospital systems and healthcare provider alliances. HIGPA’s mission is to advocate on behalf of health care group purchasing associations, to provide educational opportunities designed to improve efficiencies in the purchase, sale and utilization of all goods and services within the health industry and to promote meaningful dialogue between GPOs. For more information, visit www.higpa.org.