



Just-in-time Information Finally Arrives

Matt Johnson, Vice President, Strategy

Cory Shouse, Director, Enterprise Business Intelligence

How the informatics revolution has turned into the data evolution

Know now. Hasn't that always been the goal, to know more about how a pharmaceutical product moves through the supply chain and to know it as soon as possible? The great informatics revolution was going to sweep through healthcare and completely transform the way pharmaceutical manufacturers access and act upon data. Manufacturers were going to be able to see real-time views of all their products throughout the entire supply chain. They were going to be able to know when physicians made decisions about administering their products—and, more importantly, why the physicians made those decisions. Data was supposed to open unimaginable doors of opportunity for the pharmaceutical industry.

Instead, many manufacturers still settle for receiving product data via electronic data interchange (EDI), weeks or even months after their products have moved from order to distribution to administration. Others rely on reports compiled in spreadsheets and emailed to decision-makers within their organizations. Meanwhile, real-time and actionable data surrounds us in our personal lives, from hotel mini bars that instantly recognize when goodies are removed to network-connected door locks that send text messages to parents when their children have returned home from school.

from current and forecasted product inventory to weekly sales and pricing data. The portal also offers decision support tools to help manufacturers manage product supply more effectively across several distribution centers. This information is all conveyed through a comprehensive, dashboard view.

More Than Product Movement

As the timing and digestibility of distribution and specialty pharmacy data improves, manufacturers have already begun asking for more, with portal developers quick to respond. In certain instances, portal developers can now offer more granular data about how manufacturer-sponsored services like reimbursement counseling or patient assistance programs impact product success. Product data can be overlaid across manufacturer-specific sales territories to provide more accurate insight for measurement and forecasting. Dashboard views can deliver timely information about inventory levels to ensure efficient allocations of products across multiple regions. All this data can prove vital for manufacturers as they strive to produce more robust results despite an industry-wide constriction on resources.

The great informatics revolution was going to sweep through healthcare and **completely transform the way pharmaceutical manufacturers access and act upon data.**

So What Happened to Healthcare?

Clearly it's not a problem of lagging technology. Banks and credit card companies have been able to provide insight and tools through portals for years. The informatics challenge facing the pharmaceutical industry lies in the complexity of the supply chain. As the product moves from the distributor to the clinic or pharmacy and then to the patient, product data is created at each stop. Aggregating that data and turning it into meaningful information presented a jigsaw puzzle of substantial proportions.

Fortunately, companies that span the length of the supply chain have begun to piece the puzzle together; standardizing data collected at every point from manufacturer to patient. What was once a disjointed mess can now be turned into a consolidated view of product movement.

For example, the Specialty Group recently worked to develop a Web-based portal that allows manufacturer stakeholders to view information about their products on a daily basis. They can see everything

Looking ahead, patient treatment and compliance management data remains the loftiest goal for pharmaceutical informatics. But even in that area, the near-term potential appears promising. Increased physician use of electronic medical records and practice management systems will result in a deeper pool of accurate treatment data. When combined with manufacturer-sponsored compliance and reimbursement initiatives, this data pool becomes tremendously valuable for manufacturers, as well as physicians and payers.

Under what circumstances is Medication A preferred over Medication B? Are potential cost differentials justified by clinical evidence? How does therapy compliance affect clinical outcomes? How does it influence the economics of care? These are just a handful of questions that might be answered as the field of pharmaceutical informatics moves forward.

Maybe it's not the giant leap forward that so many had predicted. But steadily, we're reaching the "know now" future we always envisioned. ■

AMERISOURCEBERGEN SPECIALTY GROUP provides the comprehensive resources needed to effectively launch, market, support and distribute specialty pharmaceuticals to providers and patients. For more information, visit www.absg.com.