Mölnlycke Health Care has developed a range of GS1-compliant product labelling to offer safe and efficient products to its customers.

Mölnlycke was founded in 1849 as a textile company and has gone through several mergers and acquisitions over the years and is now one of the world’s leading providers of wound care and single-use surgical products and services to the healthcare sector. The company has about 7000 employees and manufacturing plants in Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Malaysia, Thailand, Poland, UK and US.

**The problem**

During the last decade in particular there has been a lot of activity where various companies with different processes and differing product ranges have been merged into the business. Whilst trying to standardise internal processes the situation was impacted in 2009 when the Andalusian Health Service in Spain mandated GS1 standards for the coding and symbol requirements for products they were purchasing. The aim was to maximise the reliability of the identification of a product and its characteristics and to promote the effective use of automatic product identification systems within the supply chain.

Mölnlycke met the tight deadlines set by the Andalusian Health Service in late 2009 by incorporating the relevant barcodes into the product labelling for this region. However, in mid 2010 with the events taking place in the healthcare sector as a whole Mölnlycke decided to complete a full assessment of their products against the specifications set by GS1. This research was initially conducted on products distributed within Europe but was then expanded to look at products globally.

The results of the assessment showed that, while the products within Mölnlycke were labelled with GS1 barcodes, there were a number of cases where the barcodes did not meet the detailed specifications set out by GS1. This was explained by acquisitions that were not yet fully integrated, different processes being used within the manufacturing sites and the varying product ranges.
The solution

Initially it was thought that to solve the problem, the company could use a single label design and update the packaging artworks where required. After looking into the results in more detail, it was apparent that a single label was not viable due to the different product information required on the labeling such as CE marking, sterilization methods, etc. Mölnlycke therefore decided to design a range of product labels that would satisfy the requirements both internally and externally.

The company decided to work closely with GS1 UK on a joint project to ensure that they were working towards a solution that was not only compliant with the GS1 standards. By taking this approach Mölnlycke also facilitated compliance with the up and coming new regulations covering Unique Device Identification (UDI). The data within the GS1 barcodes will now enable automatic identification of the products at any point in the supply chain. Mölnlycke also invested in new verification equipment to ensure that all barcodes meet not only the GS1 standards but also the print quality standards set out in ISO 15416 for the printing of barcodes. The labels also needed to be adaptable so that they could be changed to fit local requirements where possible. This meant that new acquisitions could be easily merged into the company in the future.

As part of this initiative Mölnlycke have updated policies and procedures which will ensure ongoing compliance with new regulations and standards.

Conclusion

Since the initial analysis of the product range back in 2010 a significant amount of time and effort has been expended to ensure full compliance with GS1 standards. Mölnlycke is now in the final stages of completing this initiative.

The global nature of GS1 standards makes it easier for Mölnlycke to market their products throughout the world and expand into new markets. As we are all aware technologies are always evolving and things move on so Mölnlycke has also ensured that these developments are addressed by dedicating a specialist resource to ensuring that the GS1 standards are being met for any acquisitions in order to safeguard patient safety through the identification and tracking of products.