

# Increasing Patient Safety, Reducing Medication Errors

## #1 Healthcare Priority For Everyone

(NAPSA)—Medication errors are the eighth in leading causes of death in the United States—higher than motor vehicle accidents, breast cancer and AIDS—an alarming statistic to patients who entrust their lives to doctors, nurses, pharmacists, hospitals and pharmaceutical companies on a daily basis.

To address this issue, the healthcare and pharmaceutical industries are looking to barcoding technology—applying barcodes to drugs, at the individual unit-dose level—to help ensure the correct prescription and dosage are administered to the intended patient.

Bar codes are used in every industry imaginable—food, retail, automotive—to manage inventory, track products and streamline efficiencies. Now, barcoding technology will be used to help save lives.

Within the last year, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced plans to propose a ruling to mandate barcode labeling on human drug products and medical devices to help reduce the number of preventable drug errors in the U.S. This proposal has the entire healthcare industry concentrating efforts on formulating new policies, procedures and products.

At the forefront are pharmaceutical companies like American Pharmaceutical Partners, Inc. (APP), a specialty drug company that manufactures more than 120 injectable product formulations for the hospital market. APP has taken the initiative to help hospitals reduce medication errors by barcoding all of its products well before the FDA imposes mandates. In fact, APP plans to have all barcoding initiatives completed in January, 2003.

“We believe it is our responsibility as a leading pharmaceutical



**A nurse at a Carilion Health Systems hospital uses barcoding technology to ensure patients' records match with the drug and dosage prescribed.**

manufacturer to provide healthcare facilities with the tools needed to take all preventative measures to increase patient safety,” said Patrick Soon-Shiong, M.D., chairman, president and chief executive officer.

Here are five quick tips on how you can take an active role and **AVOID** medication errors:

- **A**sk about your medication—Find out what the drug does, when it should be taken, dosages, etc. Have discussions about multiple prescriptions, drug interactions and side effects. If the appearance, color or smell is different, ask your nurse or pharmacist to double-check the prescription.
- **V**ocalize concerns—Ask questions and have discussions with your healthcare professionals. Be aware of your treatment, procedures and surroundings.
- **O**rganize—Keep a running list of prescriptions, dosages, times administered and foods eaten.
- **I**nquire—Take charge of your illness, research treatments and procedures.
- **D**evelop relationships—Get to know your healthcare professionals—doctors, nurses and pharmacists.