

The dm+d is hosted and managed by the NHS Business Services Authority, Prescription Pricing Division (PPD). It provides a unique code for each UK medicine pack which will help improve patient safety, and enable electronic prescribing and electronic patient records.

What is dm+d?

The dm+d is a dictionary containing unique identifiers and associated textual descriptions for medicines and medical devices.

It has been developed for use throughout the NHS (in both primary and secondary care) as a means of uniquely identifying the specific medicines or devices used in the diagnosis or treatment of patients.

The dm+d will become the NHS standard for medicines and device identification, enabling clinical system interoperability between diverse clinical systems by ensuring safe and reliable exchange of information on medicines and devices and allow effective decision support through linkage of data.

Improving Patient Safety is at the heart of all of the NHS IT initiatives being driven forward by Government. It is estimated that medication errors cost the NHS about £500 million per year in additional days spent in hospital. The National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) has emphasised the importance of 'designing solutions that prevent harm'. Electronic prescribing and improved computer prescribing and dispensing systems have a vital part to play in reducing medication errors and transcription errors by providing clear, unambiguous, timely information.

These technical developments underpin the overall NHS Quality and Safety Agenda. The dm+d will contribute to the wider benefits to patients and healthcare professionals through the provision of consistent textual descriptors and codes for prescribing and dispensing leading to safer systems (less prescribing and dispensing errors). Further benefits will follow as links with the coding and bar coding systems used in the Supply Chain are developed.

Until now there has been no common, standardised vocabulary for clinical products. This situation does not allow interoperability between diverse clinical systems, or allow effective decision support through linkage of data. The case for change is driven at a strategic level by the need to underpin and support key national initiatives by providing a unique and unambiguous identifier.

The Dictionary of Medicines and Devices (**dm+d**) is part of the UK Clinical Products Reference Source (UKCPRS) project being undertaken by the NHS Information Authority and implemented by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA), Prescription Pricing Division (PPD).

The **dm+d** will provide a unique product identifier for every prescribable item in primary care (eventually UKCPRS will include the Secondary Care Drug Dictionary & Medical Devices Dictionary).

This use of unique codes will facilitate more efficient processing and reimbursement of prescription, electronic Prescribing and the electronic Patient Record. The coding also provides substantial opportunities in audit capability.

The **dm+d** is a subset of SNOMED CT (Systemised Nomenclature of Medicine) and thus is recognised as an NHS standard.

Data

The two important elements of the **dm+d** describe:

- products as concepts (called virtual medicinal products or VMP) e.g. atenolol 50mg tablets or latex catheter 20 gauge
- and real products (called actual medicinal products or AMP) e.g. atenolol 50 mg tablets made by AAH pharmaceuticals or Tenormin LS 50 mg tablets from Astra Zeneca

Each of these elements can be expressed as packs as well e.g. atenolol 50mg tablets 28 pack (called a virtual medicinal product pack or VMPP). If we add the manufacturer we can now get a real world pack (called Actual Medicinal Product Pack).

How is this used? An example would be where a GP wants to prescribe atenolol to his patient. On his computer he would identify the virtual medicinal product pack, atenolol 50mg tablets, 28 pack. This would be written on the prescription. Note that he has not specified a manufacturer.

On receiving the prescription the pharmacist would fill it with the version of the product he has available e.g. atenolol 50mg tablet, 28 pack made by AAH Pharmaceuticals. This would be the actual medicinal product pack, AMPP, and would allow the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA), Prescription Pricing Division (PPD) to know exactly what was dispensed