

Reducing health care costs with automated prescription filling

Automated pharmacies use both small stand alone dispensers serving hospitals and small pharmacies up to big pharmacies delivering 80,000 prescriptions per day. They all rely on automated product identification.

Automated mail order pharmacies are broken into several sections connected by conveyors. Each section performs a particular function. All areas are connected by conveyors using both totes and pill pucks to move products. Bottle filling and prescription bottles are labelled with bar code and customer labels and are dropped in plastic pucks™ that holds empty bottles during movement. These pucks have RFID tags and the ID tag is associated to the bar code label on the bottles. The prescription information is also written on the tag in the puck associating it with a particular order, customer, etc. The control system guides the puck and bottle along a conveyor to an IPD (individual pill dispenser). The IPD automatically fills the bottle with the correct prescription. The host control guides the newly filled prescription bottle to a review station where a pharmacist checks that each order is correctly filled.