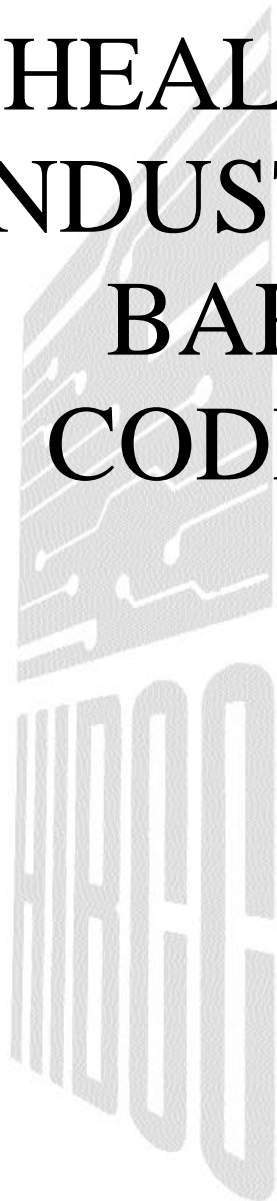


WHY DOES HEALTHCARE  
NEED THE

HEALTH  
INDUSTRY  
BAR  
CODE?



*Because . . .*

***Health care institutions have unique safety requirements not found in typical commercial “cash register” settings.***

***The HIBCC Bar Code Standard (HIBC) was specifically designed to address those more stringent safety and security considerations.***

***Its design allows it to avoid the shortcomings of generic, retail-based systems.***

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HIBCC, IHIBCC, HIBC, LIC  
and the HIBCC LOGO are  
registered trade and service  
marks of the Health Industry  
Business Communications Council.

UCC and EAN are registered marks of the  
uniform code council, inc. and EAN  
international respectively.

***It is critical that the  
bar coding system you choose be:***

**SAFE**

---

...for use in patient care settings

**FLEXIBLE**

---

...to accommodate product IDs

**ACCURATE**

---

Check characters assure safety

**CONSISTENT**

---

...at all packaging levels and with  
various scanning technologies

**GLOBALLY COMPATIBLE**

---

Identical data structure throughout  
the world

**INDUSTRY SUPPORTED**

---

Endorsed by major  
health industry associations

# Safe for use with Patients . . . .

Does this symbology provide the lowest possible error rate to minimize medical errors and ensure patient safety?

**HIBC**  
**YES**

**EAN/UCC**  
**NO**

Independent tests have shown HIBC Code 128 and HIBC Code 39 to be from six to 46 times more accurate than the UPC-A /EAN-13 symbology\*. HIBCC's low error rate is critical in caregiving environments.

The UPC code has been tested and shown to yield scanning errors at a rate that is six to 46 times higher than the HIBC Code\*. Errors are unacceptable in health care environments — the consequences could be fatal.

## Accurate . . . .

Does the standard utilize every measure available to ensure the validity of its data?

**HIBC**  
**YES**

**EAN/UCC**  
**NO**

The HIBC standard uses a check character on all data messages and for all related data. This ensures that no matter how the data is transmitted, it will be secure.

The EAN/UCC standard uses a check character only for the product ID. There is no link to related data messages such as lot number, expiration date and quantity.

## Globally Compatible . . . .

Is the standard truly “Globally Compatible?”

**HIBC**  
**YES**

**EAN/UCC**  
**NO**

The HIBC Bar Code Standard is the same everywhere in the world. This avoids supply-chain compatibility problems, complex database management issues and potential overlabeling costs when shipping overseas.

The EAN/UCC standard is not the same everywhere in the world. In the US, a 14-digit format is used, while elsewhere in the world, EAN uses 13 digits. As a result, US companies that use EAN/UCC-14 may be forced to overlabel with EAN-13 in order to export their products.

\*Independent study conducted by the Center for Automatic Identification Education and Research  
Ohio University - College of Engineering and Technology.

# Flexible . . .

Does the design of the standard allow labelers adequate flexibility?

## HIBC

**YES**

The HIBC standard is versatile. Its format employs both letters and numbers, and allows product catalog identifiers to contain as many as 13 characters.

## EAN/UCC

**NO**

The EAN/UCC standard is restrictive. It forces labelers to use numbers only, and limits product catalog identifiers to a short, fixed-length format.

Does the design of the standard allow for future growth?

## HIBC

**YES**

The HIBC standard is designed to accommodate an unlimited number of product identifiers. Its variable-length, alphanumeric format eliminates the need for costly, periodic revisions.

## EAN/UCC

**NO**

The obsolete design of the EAN/UCC standard allows only a limited number of labels. As a result, it must be periodically changed, causing unnecessary costs in database and software updates.

Does the standard support every labeler's product ID strategy?

## HIBC

**YES**

The HIBC-LIC standard allows labelers to use their own existing Product Catalog Identifiers in the bar code. This significantly reduces cost, complexity and risk when cross-referencing, and facilitates ease of traceability in the event of a recall.

## EAN/UCC

**NO**

Labelers that use the EAN/UCC standard are forced to use a rigid, all-numeric, fixed-length format. This requires them to either change all of their existing Product Catalog Identifiers, or endure complex and costly cross-referencing.

# Consistent . . . . .

Are all bar code readers capable of reading the standard's symbologies?

**HIBC**

**YES**

All bar code readers can scan and interpret the HIBC symbologies.

**EAN/UCC**

**NO**

Bar code readers without a symbol ID function, which is found only in more expensive models, cannot accurately recognize EAN/UCC-128 symbols.

Is this standard easy to understand?

**HIBC**

**YES**

In the HIBC system, a single product ID can be used for numerous packaging levels of a product. These packaging levels (each, box, case, etc.) are represented by a package-level indicator in the HIBC data structure.

**EAN/UCC**

**NO**

The EAN-13 data structure fails to use a package-level indicator. Instead, it assigns completely different product IDs for each level of packaging. This causes confusion, since the same product may have numerous product IDs.

Is this standard easy to implement?

**HIBC**

**YES**

The HIBC system uses only two symbologies - Code 39 and Code 128; and only two data formats - Primary and Secondary. The same symbol and data format is used on all levels of logistical packaging, and the same data format is used everywhere in the world.

**EAN/UCC**

**NO**

The EAN/UCC system uses numerous bar code types and data formats to carry product information. As the system's complexity increases, so too will the cost and the risk of error when implementing it.

# Industry Supported . . .

Has this standard been widely adopted in the medical/surgical product industry?

**HIBC**

**YES**

**EAN/UCC**

**NO**

Does this standard meet the specific needs of the health care industry?

**HIBC**

**YES**

**EAN/UCC**

**NO**

Can the healthcare industry rely on strong support for this standard?

**HIBC**

**YES**

**EAN/UCC**

**NO**

Approximately two-thirds of US bar code labeled medical/surgical products use HIBC. (Source: Health Industry Distributor's Association)

The EAN/UCC bar code was derived from existing standards in the grocery/retail industry. It does not meet the unique product ID requirements in healthcare.

The HIBC standards were developed by industry experts specifically to meet the stringent requirements of product identification in healthcare.

Because the EAN/UCC standards were not designed for use in healthcare, they do not address all of healthcare's product identification needs. For example, there is no check character in the EAN/UCC secondary symbol.

The HIBC standard is supported worldwide. And because its standard is healthcare-specific, HIBCC's only priority is healthcare.

The EAN/UCC specification is dominated by the requirements of the grocery/retail market. Consequently, healthcare is not the primary focus of EAN/UCC.



The Health Industry Business Communications Council (HIBCC) was founded in 1983 as an industry-sponsored, non-profit standards development organization. HIBCC maintains global Supplier and Provider Labeling Standards for the health care industry and is a leader in standards development for electronic commerce.

Our standards are extended globally via IHIBCC, an international network of HIBCC offices.

Both the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accredit HIBCC's bar code labeling standards.

For information on how to become a HIBCC labeler, visit our Web site at:

[www.hibcc.org](http://www.hibcc.org)

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