

Pharmaceutical anti-counterfeiting

Hologram providing effective combination of authentication features

by Ian Lancaster & Glenn Wood, IHMA

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Counterfeit concerns

A joint survey by the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) and Pfizer revealed that pharmacists are concerned over the global problem of counterfeit medicines. The survey, conducted by APCO Insight, was reported at the FIP Congress, Lisbon, Portugal.

Consequently, Ian Lancaster, general secretary of the International Hologram Manufacturers Association (IHMA), believes that the pharmaceutical industry can do more to combat counterfeit pharmaceuticals.

Lancaster cites survey results that almost two thirds (63 *per cent*) of 2000 community, retail, and hospital pharmacists surveyed in Europe, the United States, and Australia believe current policies and technology are insufficient to deal with counterfeit medicines. In addition, 61*per cent* of those surveyed also said that the prevalence of counterfeit medication is a serious issue in their country.

“Pharmacists feel more has to be done about tackling the counterfeiters and ensuring patients receive safe, effective, and bona fide medicines,” says Lancaster. “So one of the key challenges is for manufacturers and producers to stay ahead of the counterfeiters.”

Role of packaging

Packaging-based solutions may begin to play a more frequent role in such programs now that the European Parliament voted for the “EU Falsified Medicines Directive” in February 2011. The directive

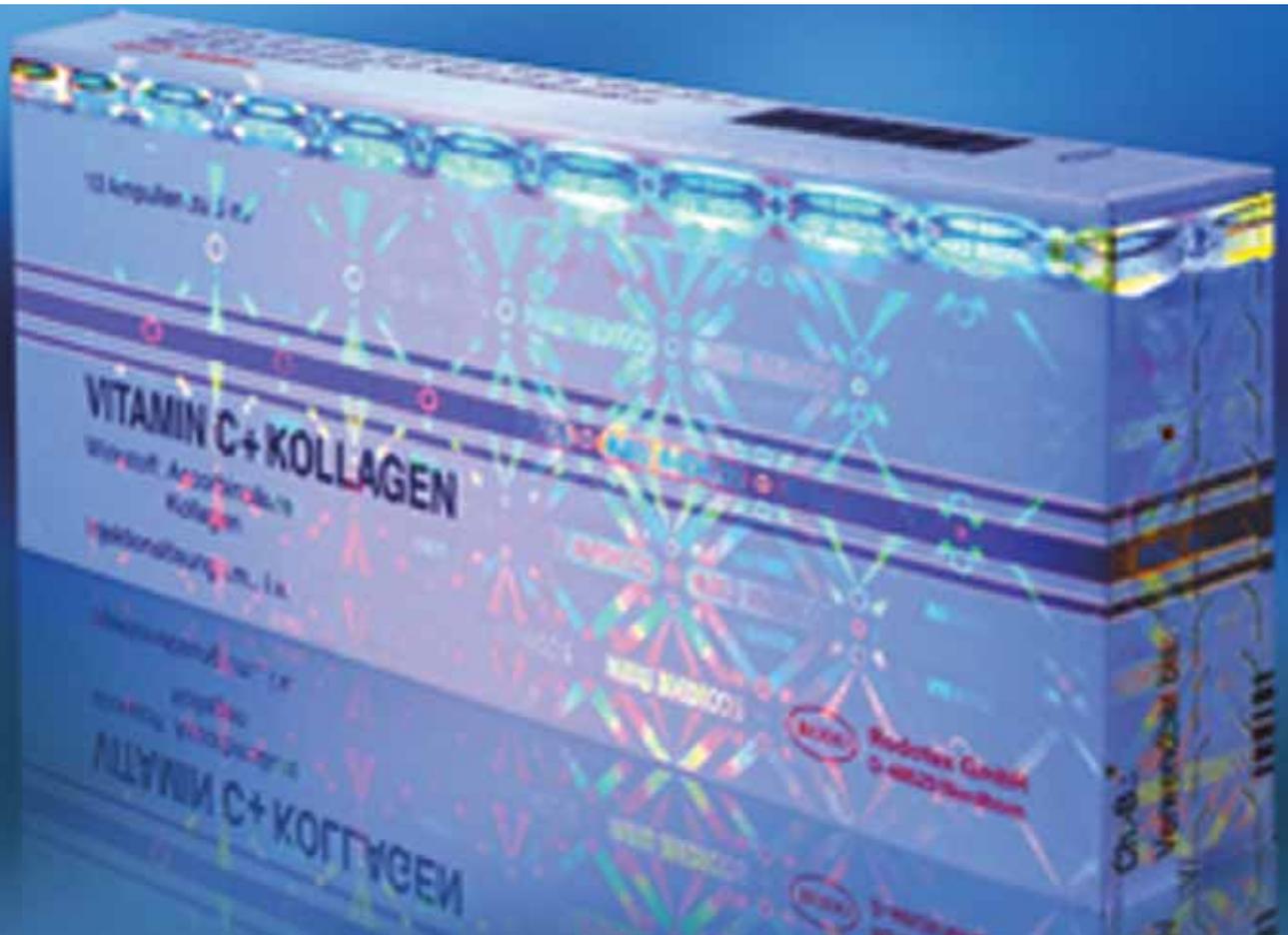
seeks to develop packaging and labeling measures that can help the marketplace distinguish falsified medicinal products from other illegal products as well as from infringements of intellectual property rights. (*For more details on the legislation, please see “EU Moves toward Pan-European Law.”*)

Glenn Wood, U.S. media representative for the IHMA, said Any move to tackle the global rise in pharmaceutical counterfeiting has to be seen as positive. This is a critical time for those involved in tackling counterfeit pharmaceuticals. Counterfeits are on the increase with confiscation at borders or during enforcement raids on the rise not only in developing countries but also in the United States and in other developed nations.”

Wood calls the EU Falsified Medicines Directive a welcome move. “Along with other global initiatives, the directive will undoubtedly play a vital part in the constant battle to stem the flood of counterfeit drugs and help producers stay one step ahead of the criminals.”

Hologram authentication as solution

Lancaster and Wood suggest that holograms can play a key role in combating criminal activity. “Holograms work best where the packaging remains with the unit dose—almost everywhere except the United States—and when they are regionalized for a specific market,” says Lancaster. “In the



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United States, pharmacists don’t usually have access to the original unit-dose packaging and the bulk packs they purchase almost never have holograms.”

Hologram providing three layered security

Holograms can now combine authentication overt features with covert elements and forensic and track and trace elements to provide a highly effective weapon in the fight against illicit products, says Wood. And they can be used as seals, labels, or as the foil in a blister pack.

Lancaster adds that there are examples of how holograms provide a successful and vital detection function in pharmaceutical anti-counterfeiting strategies. A few years ago Malaysia introduced its Meditag serialized hologram label to be found on all registered medicines—traditional and

western—which has helped the Ministry of Health inspectors to detect unauthorized and counterfeit product.

“The evolving anti-counterfeiting role of holograms lies in their ability to combine authentication with detection,” says Lancaster. “And sometimes pack enhancement, as Rodotex GmbH has shown with its packaging for Vitamin C+Kollagen in Indonesia. This is why the more enlightened pharmaceutical companies and enforcement agencies continue to make them an integral part of modern anti-counterfeiting strategies.”

Sources:

The International Hologram Manufacturers Association (IHMA), which is made up of over 80 leading producers and converters of holograms for banknote security, anti-counterfeiting, brand protection, packaging, graphics and other commercial applications around the world. For more information, go to