Maximum safety when dispensing medication

Patient safety is the top priority for Galenica Santé pharmacies. To ensure this, GaleniCare takes appropriate measures concerning processes, infrastructure, and training and development. The cornerstone is an outstanding quality management system, which supports employees in their day-to-day work.

The Amavita pharmacy on Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich is extremely busy at lunchtime. Two pharmacy assistants behind the counter are there to advise customers. The range in winter features cold and flu medications. A new customer comes into the pharmacy, is welcomed by a pharmacy assistant and asked what he needs. He would like a headache tablet. The pharmacy assistant asks whether the medication is for him. He nods. She also wants to know whether he is taking any other medications. He answers no. She then asks how long he has had the headache and whether he has any questions about the product. He replies he's had it for a few hours and does not have any other questions. She takes the medication off the shelf, scans it and asks whether the customer would like the dosage instructions in writing. He says yes, and the pharmacy assistant creates a personalised dosage label with the help of his Amavita customer card. The label includes the patient's name, the intended use of the medication and information on how it should be taken. It also shows the pharmacy name and phone number. The pharmacy assistant explains the dosage instructions verbally to the patient and asks him if he would like anything else. The customer makes additional purchases. Before dispensing the medication to the customer, the pharmacy assistant again checks the medication name, strength, dosage form, pack size and dosage instructions. She then tells the customer that the pharmacy team would be happy to answer any questions he might have during or after treatment. She says goodbye and tells the customer she hopes he feels better soon.

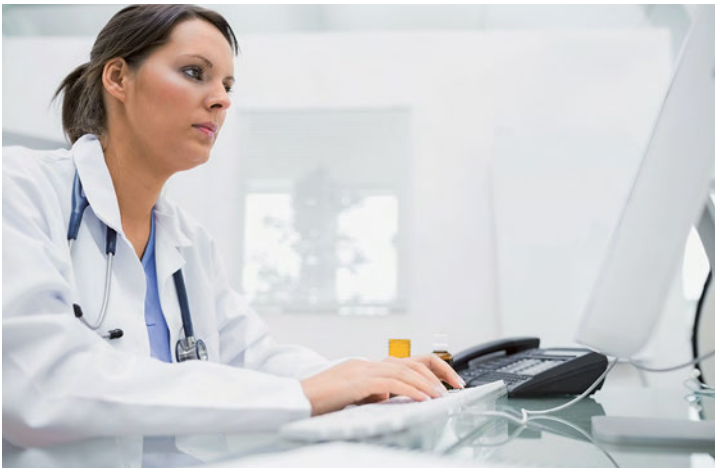## ‣ Uniform processes ensure safety

This sales situation for a non-prescription medicine – known as an OTC sale, requested by a customer – is described in detail in the quality management system (QMS) of GaleniCare, the management company for the pharmacy formats of Galenica. The document details exactly what steps must be taken by pharmacy assistants and pharmacists to ensure that the medication helps the patient as quickly as possible without posing a risk to his or her health. GaleniCare's quality management includes more than 100 standard operating procedures (SOPs) of this nature for most activities in the area of pharmaceutical production and dispensing, as well as on data protection and duty of confidentiality, hygiene (for example when taking blood) and medicine

eHealth – digitisation of healthcare

Swiss citizens have become more mobile in recent years. It is increasingly commonplace to change canton of residence, health insurer or doctor, and to travel abroad. As a result, key information regarding a patient's medical history is often missing when needed. New technologies offer new solutions to ensure patient safety. In 2007, the Federal Council approved the eHealth strategy, which is designed to guarantee efficient, safe and cost-effective healthcare throughout Switzerland. As part of this strategy, the Federal Act on the Electronic Patient Record (EPRA) was drawn up. The Act, which regulates the introduction, dissemination and development of patient records, enters into force in 2017 giving everyone in Switzerland the option of making their medical data accessible to medical professionals via an electronic patient record, so that the data are available at all times, anywhere. This means that patients can receive better quality, safer and more efficient treatment. Initially, the Act requires the introduction of electronic patient records only for in-patient facilities such as hospitals and care homes.

disposal. "The SOPs are available for all of our roughly 330 pharmacies in French, German and Italian, and comply with legal requirements", explains specialist pharmacist Daniel Hugentobler, who is responsible for quality management at GaleniCare.

Safe purchase, storage and production of pharmaceuticals

Patient health and medication safety are the top priority for staff in the pharmacies. The SOPs help them to ensure this safety. GaleniCare regularly checks compliance with the SOPs in individual pharmacies. In addition to an announced audit every three years, anonymous mystery shopper purchases and calls are made three times per year to check that the SOPs are being observed.

Further drug safety and patient protection measures concern drug purchasing, storage and production, and therefore also the infrastructure. "All pharmacies purchase medicines exclusively from government-certified and -approved suppliers, including the logistics companies of Galenica Santé: Galexis and Unione Farmaceutica Distribuzione", stresses Hugentobler. Producing pharmaceuticals in-house requires a cantonal licence, with strict legal requirements. "The SOPs contain clear rules on producing pharmaceuticals and what should be included on the label. We not only check compliance with the regulations, but also the equipment required for production", he adds. When storing medicines, the pharmacist has to follow the statutory requirements regarding room or refrigerator temperature precisely. In addition, most pharmacies have a consultation room where the pharmacist can talk to the customer discreetly about health problems and medication. This room is essential for consultations when dispensing the morning-after pill, for example. In the area of infrastructure, additional key safety aspects include a modern IT system and appropriate building services with regards heating, ventilation and air conditioning.

Promoting employees' specialist competence

GaleniCare offers pharmacy employees various training and further education courses to expand their knowledge and keep it up to date. "We hold courses in German and French eight times a year on the GaleniCare QMS and the legal bases for protecting patient safety. These one-day courses include practical exercises and discussions about patient-oriented solutions", says Hugentobler. "We check the qualifications of all new recruits and decide whether they need to attend the courses. For additional pharmacy services such as CardioTest® or AllergyCheck, employees complete certified courses offered by the training and further education department of GaleniCare", says Hugentobler, adding: "In 2016, more than 1,000 pharmacy assistants and pharmacists attended our courses. The subject of quality management and patient safety is also central in the basic training of pharmacy assistants. Every year, some 200 apprentices in our pharmacies complete the training to become a pharmacy assistant."

GaleniCare QMS held in high regard

Winconcept, the service provider for autonomous and independent pharmacies, has also been offering the QMS for independent pharmacies under the name "Process One" since 2015. More than 50 partner pharmacies currently use the system. The largest Swiss health insurer is also convinced by GaleniCare's QMS. "We developed a quality label together with CSS Versicherung that identifies pharmacies with particularly good performance in the areas of patient service and professional advice. The aim is to noticeably improve quality for customers. Some 200 GaleniCare pharmacies have performed better than average and were able to display the quality sticker in their pharmacy", Hugentobler says proudly, adding that the GaleniCare QMS is also officially recognised by a cantonal authority.

Electronic patient record further improves safety
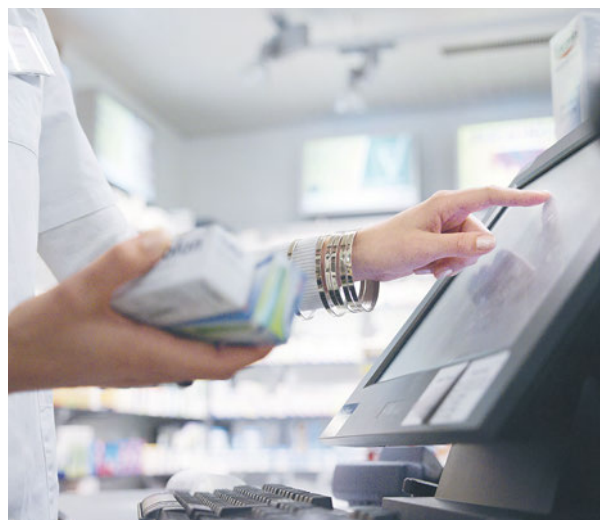
For HCI Solutions in particular, which has longstanding experience in the area of databases and management solutions, the development in the eHealth field represents a considerable opportunity: "Through our networked software and database products, we support smooth collaboration with the various service providers and thereby contribute to improve safety when dispensing medicines", explains Ulrich Schaefer, Head HCI Solutions. "The electronic patient record in particular makes an important contribution to protecting patients' health", he adds. HCI Solutions develops software for electronic medication dispensing, based on the needs of service providers and patients. All relevant information on medicines, dosage instructions and other important patient information can be recorded in it digitally.

Patrick Mathieu from the Sun Store pharmacy in Versoix (Geneva) says: "Thanks to this information, we can see straightaway whether the patient is taking any other medication that could cause a negative interaction. This gives us the opportunity to consider alternatives or determine a more appropriate dosage." All Amavita and Sun Store pharmacies can access a customer's patient record. In Schaefer's words: "If, for example, a customer leaves a prescription at their Sun Store pharmacy in St. Gallen and forgets to take it with them when they go on a skiing holiday in Valais, they can still collect their medication from the Sun Store pharmacy in Zermatt." A patient record can only be created with the agreement of the customer. In addition, all employees have a duty of confidentiality under the Swiss Criminal Code.