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Zuellig Pharma: A Sustainable Approach to Healthcare Access Through Innovative Solutions

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Equitable medicine distribution and accessibility are critical to the healthcare system's resilience. However, disparities in access and equity continue to exist and these are pertinent to address, especially as healthcare disruptions can negatively impact an economy's public health and patient care.

As powerful catalysts of transformational change, the COVID-19 pandemic tested pharmaceutical supply chains' resilience and flexibility. In the wake of the pandemic, the healthcare sector demands an agile and robust supply chain risk management system to address disruptions, ensure resilience, and smooth operations.

In recent years, supply chain risk management practices have been revolutionised by technology, with new innovations and risk management solutions reducing accessibility concerns through real-time insights and data-driven mitigation strategies. Disruptive technologies and Supply Chain Risk Management (SCRM) can minimise risks by identifying disruptions, preparing contingency plans, and alleviating overall impact.

Strengthening Healthcare SCRM Strategies to Overcome Accessibility Disparities

Blockchain-enabled healthcare supply chains and IoT sensors facilitate comprehensive, secure, and traceable real-time risk assessments. Predictive analytics and artificial intelligence algorithms can help identify and mitigate disruptions, ensuring patient accessibility.

Zuellig Pharma, a leading healthcare solutions company with the purpose of making healthcare more accessible, harnesses the transformative potential of disruptive technologies to enhance supply chain resilience, agility, and responsiveness to risks, developing a connected pharmaceutical ecosystem through innovative digital platforms.

Providing distribution, commercialisation, clinical trial management and patient care solutions across 16 markets, Zuellig Pharma works with over 450 clients, including 20 of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies. The company's core business efforts focus on improving health outcomes and access to quality healthcare for over 200,000 clinics, hospitals, pharmacies, and facilities in the firm's distribution network.

To increase coverage and access to healthcare in rural and remote areas, Zuellig Pharma continues to invest in R&D of cold chain solutions, especially in light of the increasing need for temperature-sensitive handling in emerging healthcare solutions. For example, **eZCooler**—an innovative, reusable passive packaging solution that facilitates the transportation of temperature-sensitive products—ensures product integrity for patient safety during challenging last-mile delivery while reducing freight carbon footprint. Zuellig Pharma's extensive cold chain capabilities boast over 18,000 cold room pallets, surpassing international standards for distributing biologics and vaccines and safeguarding patients' access to lifesaving medication in its intended condition.

Its Singapore-headquartered APAC Regional Distribution Centre meets the highest pharmaceutical and cold chain management standards, and is operated by GMP-certified workstations. Through its distribution network and cold chain reach, the company ensures seamless healthcare access throughout. Its facilities in markets such as Malaysia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Korea also deploy state-of-the-art infrastructure to ensure quality and delivery excellence.

Fostering Healthcare Resilience, Agility, Access and Adaptability

A resilient supply chain requires agility and flexibility to adapt to evolving market dynamics. The data integrity and accountability exercises carried out by Zuellig Pharma are a testament to the company's commitment to upholding the highest standards.

To enhance supply chain efficiency and address Asia's fragmented healthcare ecosystem, the company has invested substantially in building a digital infrastructure. Its Data Analytics ZiP platform, for instance, empowers clients by providing real-time insights into treatment management, pricing, and healthcare trends. In addition, Zuellig Pharma uses a Transport Management System for load optimisation, consolidating orders and optimising delivery routes to ensure that the fewest numbers of vehicles are used while maximising deliveries.

Zuellig Pharma has also developed several digital platforms such as **eZRx+** and **eZTracker** to ensure accessibility, traceability, and compliance while remaining resilient to supply chain disruptions.

eZRx+ is an end-to-end B2B interactive ecommerce portal that allows healthcare organisations to purchase medications digitally from anywhere seamlessly and efficiently. The platform provides full visibility with high accuracy, transparency, and eliminates manual errors, as well as self-service capabilities. According to a representative from Zuellig Pharma's customer, Tep Nika pharmacy in Cambodia, patient confidence has increased as the platform improved their operational efficiency by 70% and reduced paperwork by almost 80%, allowing them to reallocate resources to better serve patients.

The issue of counterfeiting, parallel trade and diversions remains a key challenge in the pharmaceutical landscape and networks, which makes it imperative to build trust in the supply chain. eZTracker, Asia's first blockchain-powered end-to-end supply chain solution, allows users to verify pharmaceutical authenticity, and offers a potential solution against expired, poorly stored, or counterfeit drugs. With over 200,000 scans to date, the eZTracker solution has successfully tracked $19 million worth of suspected counterfeits and diversions.

Providing strategic partnerships and industry collaborations is a key part of Zuellig Pharma's approach to enhancing oversight of pharmaceutical products and combating illicit activities. In partnership with technology firms, regulatory bodies, and industry associations, Zuellig Pharma deploys innovative solutions and implements best practices to safeguard pharmaceutical products' traceability, integrity, and authenticity.

Climate Governance and Sustainability Goals Outlook

To uphold operational excellence, Zuellig Pharma warehouses adhere to Good Storage Distribution Practices (GSDP) and comply with ISO standards. Till date, Zuellig Pharma has achieved 7 industry certifications across different markets from the Transported Asset Protection Association (TAPA) and is working to secure certification across all markets by 2025.

Zuellig Pharma's latest 2023 Sustainability Report (Cited period: 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023) has also conveyed its unwavering commitment to transparency and accountability in its sustainability efforts. The organisation recently achieved its fourth consecutive Platinum medal from EcoVadis, the world's most trusted provider of business sustainability ratings, with a score of 90 out of 100. This achievement places Zuellig Pharma among the top 60 companies out of 130,000 respondents worldwide, and is the first organisation in Asia Pacific to reach this level.

Reliability and Patient Safety as a Cornerstone of Healthcare Accessibility

Through innovative solutions and collaboration with various stakeholders, Zuellig Pharma is strengthening across all facets, building a resilient cross-regional supply chain, improving regional infrastructure, and sharing data and knowledge across markets. By leveraging technology and investing in sustainable practices, Zuellig Pharma continues to bridge the gap between healthcare accessibility, patient safety and environmental responsibility.

Click here to access the Zuellig Pharma's 2023 Sustainability Report