Representative NDC Use in Electronic Prescribing Fact Sheet

This Fact Sheet has been created to assist in clarifying the use of the "representative NDC" as it relates to drug descriptions selected by a prescriber and transmitted to the corresponding pharmacy using the NCPDP SCRIPT™ Standard. A National Drug Code (NDC), by definition, is specific to a manufacturer/labeler, product, and associated packaging information. A representative NDC is an 11-digit NDC code that is intended to depict a category of medication regardless of package size and manufacturer/labeler. It should be a nationally available product and not be a repackaged NDC, obsolete NDC, private label NDC or unit dose NDC unless it is the only NDC available identifying that category of medication. The representative NDC used is not intended to infer specificity or preference to the embedded manufacturer/labeler. The receiving pharmacy should not assume physician intent and can utilize their own drug selection and substitution logic based on proprietary logic and compliance with any state/federal laws and regulations as needed. The drug description of the product selected by the prescriber must match the description of the representative NDC in the submitted transaction, and this description should be displayed to the pharmacy when selecting the product for dispensing.

The NCPDP SCRIPT™ Standard V2017071 requires only the description of the medication be sent in the standard, however, there are entities in the industry that require the element of NDC be included in an electronic prescription. The prescriber selects the product description to be dispensed. The NDC found in the electronic prescription is representative of the product selected by the prescriber from their prescribing system, unless the Substitution element is set to the value of "1" (Substitution not allowed by Prescriber). In the NCPDP SCRIPT™ Standard Version 2020011 and greater the element of NDC is required on all non-compounded medication electronic prescriptions.

In addition to the medication description and a representative NDC number, there are other identifiers that may be used within the NCPDP SCRIPT™ Standard to help with the identification of the medication being requested. These identifiers include:

- Compendia specific identifiers
- American Hospital Formulary Service (AHFS)
- Universal Product Code (UPC)
- National Drug File Reference (NDF-RT)
- Health Related Item (HRI)
- Unique Ingredient Identifier (UNII)
- RxNorm Semantic Branded Drug (SBD)
- RxNorm Semantic Clinical Drug (SCD)
- RxNorm Generic Package (GPCK)
- RxNorm Branded Package (BPCK)
- Device Identifier
- Med-RT (may be used in V2020011 and greater)

There are products in the market which contain the same RxNorm Clinical Drug Component code, but they may not have the same SBD, SCD, GPCK or BPCK values. An example of this is albuterol HFA inhalers. Albuterol Sulfate HFA Inhalation Aerosol is a generic description for brands named Proventil, Proair, and Ventolin. All three have 90mcg of albuterol and offer 200 doses. The differences between the devices and separate NDAs are the primary reason they are not AB rated to each other.

These identifiers, along with the Substitution element, may help in the selection of the product. The Orange Book generic equivalency rating of the medication may also play a part in the selection. It is ultimately up to the policies and procedures of the pharmacy to determine which product is selected and dispensed based on the DrugDescription element in the electronic prescription.

The NCPDP SCRIPT™ Standard provides the mechanism for the exchange of electronic prescriptions between a prescribing entity and a dispensing entity. It requires the use of the NCPDP SCRIPT™ Implementation Guide for the version associated with the electronic prescription, the NCPDP XML Standard, the most current version of the SCRIPT Implementation Recommendations document and the associated Data Dictionary and External Code List. All entities are required to use these documents when programming their software. They must also follow all State, Local and Federal laws and regulations for the location(s) of the dispensing system(s) and/or pharmacy system(s).