

Healthcare Logistics Supply Chain Improvement The Example of the Parallel Food Sector Supply Chains

Vaccine distribution has traditionally been successful using ambient stable products. New vaccines require frozen (<18 °C) or chilled (2-8 °C) temperature controlled supply chains. Bisham were asked by Project Optimize a collaboration between PATH and the World Health Organization, aimed at catalysing a shared vision of the future of health logistics systems. Our role was to assess the status of technology within the parallel food chain to provide insights on innovative alternative solutions to the problems of cold chain vaccine distribution.

Some 26 interviews were carried out with 17 organisations representing food processors, general third party logistics companies, supermarkets, humanitarian logistics providers, agricultural development, retailers, software suppliers and academia. Additionally, in-depth research into published papers, articles for the professional press and trade literature was completed.

The detailed report covered the current and emerging technologies, but more importantly highlighted the difficulties in terms of road and utilities infrastructure, education, standard operating procedures and training, things, that in the developed world, we take for granted. We also provided a road map for recommendations that incrementally will drive progress over the next 3/5 years.

The general conclusions are that:

1. There needs to be a driver of the supply chain in any territory. In Europe, retailers drive the chain; in the developing world and for Healthcare, the Ministries of Health should drive the chain but they need considerable advice, practical help and resources
2. The use of standard operating procedures, properly trained in and monitored for compliance is key to the success of the supply chain
3. Collaboration with local entrepreneurs to act as the local third party logistics carriers will be important. They need expertise, training and capital support from the global third party logistics providers.
4. Drug suppliers need to help with expertise, training and capital
5. In some ways the developing world can jump to current emerging technology but they do need to understand the risks involved in not complying with the needs of the cold chain
6. The way forward is to engage with the global and local third party logistics operators, expand any cold chain used to supply embassies and tourism, collaborate with other movers of cold chain products
7. A number of conferences to open up the cold chain problems for Healthcare would provide the contacts for continuing evolution of the cold chain
8. Some simple software is required to monitor and manage: ordering of field requirements, inventory control, distribution of product, etc.
9. e-Learning for standard operating procedures is a way of meeting the geographic challenge in training-in standard operating procedures

Bisham has been very proud to have taken the project thus far; the practical gradual implementation of the recommendations starts in the autumn.

PATH is an international non-profit organization that creates sustainable, culturally relevant solutions, enabling communities worldwide to break longstanding cycles of poor health. By collaborating with diverse public- and private-sector partners, PATH helps provide appropriate health technologies and vital strategies that change the way people think and act. PATH's work improves global health and well-being.