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4. Protects patients. Clear and accurate recall alerts flag affected products across multiple sites instantly.
5. Frees clinicians. Automation and real-time data reduce supply hassles so staff can focus on patients.
6. Streamlines operations. Smart alerts, substitutions, replenishment, and predictive data keep supply chains efficient.

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One Multi-Site Health System's Transformative Journey to Optimize Their Inventory with Electronic Shelf Labels

Arnold Chazal, CEO and Co-Founder of VueMed



Hospitals today typically contain hundreds of storage rooms and thousands of supply bins across multiple, geographically dispersed facilities in their health system. This translates to hundreds of thousands of paper labels that need to be manually updated and printed by already overburdened staff whenever there's a change in item status, description, supplier, etc. One major impact of such antiquated methods of supply chain management is that it's impossible for the item's information to be updated in real time due to being dependent on deployable staff to travel to these sites to make the changes. Any updates on sensitive data such as back orders, recalls, or discontinued items (and indication of available substitutes) can't possibly be handled in a timely manner with paper labels. As a result, there's a much greater risk of not having on-hand the items that are needed for patient care.

Electronic shelf label (ESL) solutions are a game-changer because they provide real-time item status and alerts, remote updates at the push of a button, and automated reordering. ESLs save time for both supply chain and clinical staff that would otherwise be spent on manual and low-value-added inventory tasks. They ensure item availability and safety (not recalled, not expired) and free up clinical staff to dedicate more attention and time to patients. Advanced ESL systems also have built-in replenishment signals to ensure that par levels are accurate and stockouts are prevented. They also allow for voice commands to guide the staff to needed items in crowded supply rooms in seconds using blinking LED lights on the ESL.

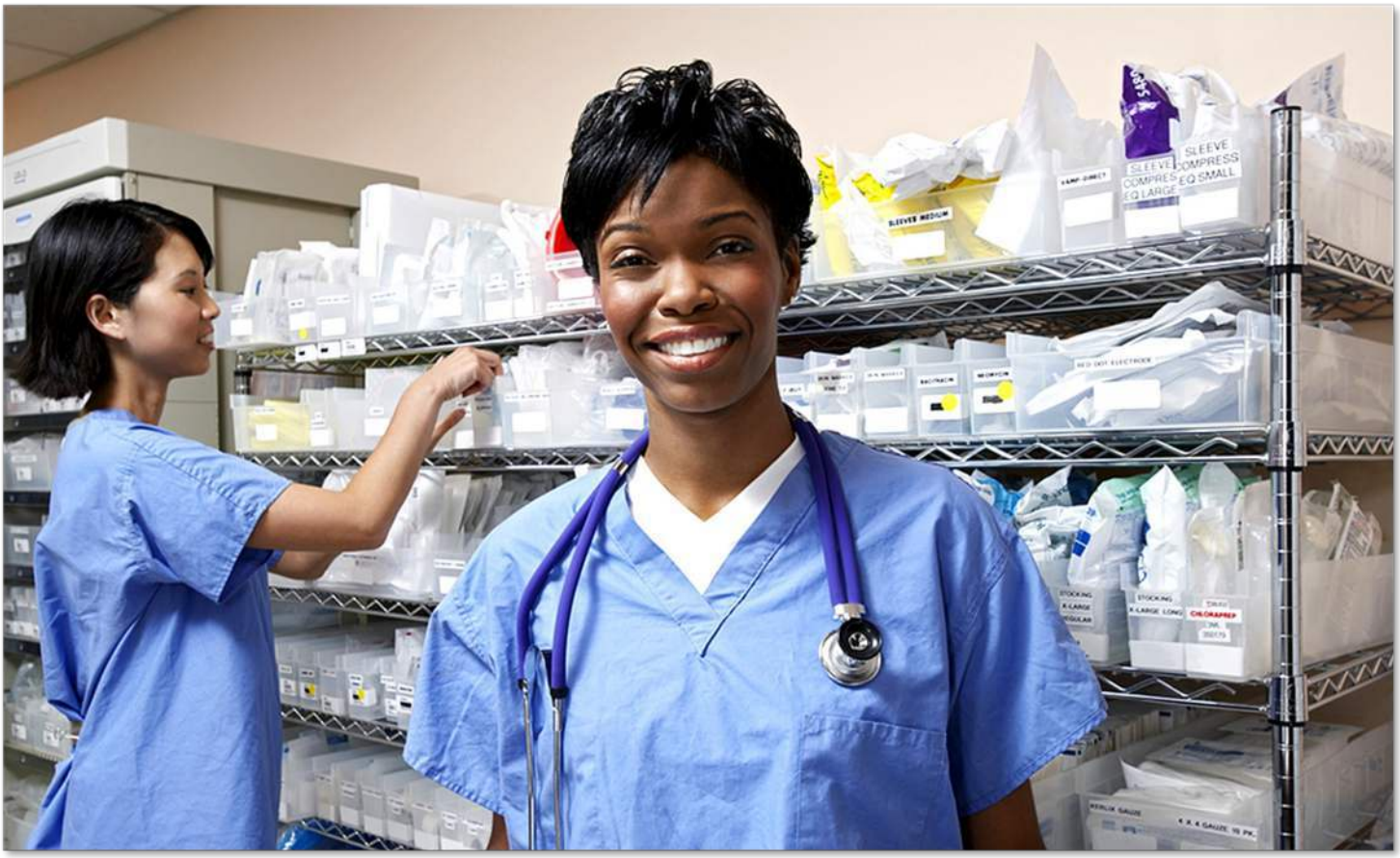
ESLs Enter the Healthcare Marketplace

At the recent AHRMM25 conference in Denver, there were a handful of purveyors of ESL solutions for hospital inventory management – my company, VueMed, included. It was one of those remarkable examples of how technology suddenly takes a leap forward by multiple companies all at once, independently from one another. In our particular case, I imagined the application of ESLs to hospital environments when I first discovered them being used widely in supermarkets in Europe a few years ago. The proverbial lightbulb went off for me that day. I realized that these electronic displays could be used for proactive inventory management and not just to display basic product details. Since then, VueMed has been working tirelessly on our ESL solution's design and features and getting it piloted at Multicare, a multi-site health system in Washington State. Clearly the market is ripe for this groundbreaking new tool.

But it's important to understand that the differences between the solutions out there are not going to be in the ESL devices themselves, which are made by a handful of reputable manufacturers overseas and have pretty much the same functionalities (customizable display, buttons, flashing lights, multi-color screens, etc.).

Not All ESL-based Solutions Are Created Equal

The key differentiating factor between all of these ESL offerings is in the capabilities of the software solution behind the ESL. Is the collected product data being analyzed in a way that provides actionable insights into improving par level management, optimizing inventory levels, rationalizing purchases, expediting just-in-time replenishment, avoiding stock outs, and saving money? Powerful data analytics are essential for ensuring that ESLs do more than just replace paper labels. And the data must be integrated with hospitals' other inventory management systems – this way, supply chain staff can easily see trends, such as which products are used most often at which sites, and then tailor the storage and reorder schedules accordingly. And most importantly, hospitals can avoid stockouts which waste valuable time for staff and can jeopardize patients' quality of care and safety.



Multicare's Transformational Experience Using ESLs

VueMed's ESL pilot project at Multicare serves as a great illustration of the power of ESL technology when combined with smart software and powerful data analytics to support inventory optimization decisions. Multicare decided to adopt ESLs for its non-acute care sites because these sites are spread all over the state and are quickly doubling in number. This phenomenon is not at all uncommon. The healthcare landscape is rapidly evolving to try to meet the demands of a growing and geographically dispersed patient population, and many organizations are expanding their footprint to include rural areas and smaller communities, presenting extremely complex supply chain challenges amid limited resources. Prior to implementing ESL technology, Multicare had to rely on two FTEs driving between six sites (with seven PAR supply rooms per site), five days a week, spending two hours at each site.

Multicare knew that this labor-intensive, heavily manual approach was unsustainable as they had already started planning to add additional sites in 2026. They urgently needed an automated solution. As Alex Vandenbroek, Supply Chain Operations Manager at Multicare, noted, "Geographically, we needed to be able to communicate and keep up with our suppliers in real-time. Now, with the ESLs in place, we can see supply usage trends even when we're not there on site." The ESL solution that Multicare implemented displays all required item details on label-size screens,

provides and updates information remotely and in real time, and reports detailed feedback to the Cloud for analysis. By utilizing ESL technology, this health system was able to almost completely automate replenishment and reordering needs, thereby ensuring the availability of items and clinician satisfaction. ESLs have provided them with real-time visibility into inventory levels and item status, including information such as on-order, back-ordered, out-of-stock, recalled, expiring, and approved item substitutes. This has empowered them to make decisions proactively and confidently.

"By utilizing ESL technology, this health system was able to almost completely automate replenishment and reordering needs, thereby ensuring the availability of items and clinician satisfaction."

Metrics included reordering and put-away time; frequency of onsite visits and commute hours by supply chain staff; number of labels generated and affixed for each item; number of delivery days; and speed of item status communication with clinical staff. The ESL technology enabled them to find items quickly in crowded supply rooms; reduce reordering time by ~50%; reduce delivery days and guarantee deliveries by 9:00 am; cut down on staff travel; decrease relabeling time and materials used; and optimize par levels and storage space in line with actual usage. With this capability at their fingertips, Multicare succeeded in reorganizing supply chain teams to support multiple locations with fewer team members needed to manage replenishment. These changes also allowed staff to focus on value-added tasks, such as data analytics and inventory optimization, and reassured clinicians that their supplies would be delivered on time.

Challenges faced and overcome at Multicare included engaging with and educating clinical leadership and change management about the new ESL technology, workflows, supply chain staffing, and delivery arrangements, and getting appropriate resources re-allocated and/or re-trained, as well as approvals to reorganize team structure and reporting relationships. By making the whole reordering process more efficient through automation and full visibility, clinical staff at remote clinics who find themselves handling inventory management tasks by default are able to greatly reduce non-core supply chain activities to focus on their essential clinical duties.

The Value Analysis

ESL-based solutions deliver measurable value across clinical, operational, and financial domains by making supplies easy to find, track, manage, analyze, and predict. When done right, ESLs enable fast, visual identification of items in overcrowded supply rooms (such as through personalized voice commands) and reliable inventory visibility into real-time item status. They eliminate procedure

delays due to out-of-stock or hard-to-find items, waste from expired or overstocked items, emergency purchases resulting from mismanaged par levels, and staff burnout from having to manually update thousands of physical labels or from not finding what they need. They also protect patients with clear and accurate recall alerts. These operational gains free clinicians from time-consuming supply chasing and management so they can spend more time on patient care. They also streamline supply workflows through status alerts, product substitutions, and automated replenishment orders, and provide predictive usage data, so that hospital materials management teams can operate more effectively.

ESL solutions also automate the reordering and replenishment process with real-time communication with the ERP system to seamlessly streamline and automate an otherwise very slow and error-prone manual process. Together, these improvements lower the total cost of ownership, strengthen patient safety and compliance, and produce clear KPIs such as stockouts and clinician-handled item search time, or total time dedicated to inventory management versus core activities. ESL technology offers a clear pathway for supply chain managers, clinicians, and operational leaders to dramatically improve supply chain operations, cut costs and spendings, reduce staff burnout, improve resource allocation, and support organizational growth.

Arnold Chazal, CEO and Co-Founder of VueMed

Arnold Chazal is the CEO and Co-Founder of VueMed, a SaaS and Cloud-based healthcare IT company that solves acute inventory management, supply chain, and product utilization documentation problems in hospitals with its suite of advanced UDI-compliant RAIN RFID, mobile, and barcode scanning solutions. VueMed's mission is to transform the healthcare supply chain into a value chain, with tools that promote greater transparency and provide more comprehensive and accurate data to improve efficiency, savings and revenue capture, enhance patient safety and care quality, and guide better decision-making. Prior to VueMed, Arnold spent 12 years in the management consulting and business intelligence industry, providing strategic advice, technology implementation, and lean process improvement solutions to Fortune companies, primarily in the healthcare field in the U.S. and Europe. He holds a B.A. from Nanterre University in Paris and a J.D. from the University of Sorbonne Law School, and completed graduate studies at Oxford University and Harvard Law School.