

Barcode errors on UK medicine packs are putting patient safety at risk, warns leading pharmacist, as petition calls for MHRA action

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Cambridge, UK – 11 October 2025 – A growing number of medicines in UK pharmacies carry incorrect or duplicate barcodes, forcing pharmacists to manually verify every pack before dispensing to patients.

In an opinion piece published this week in *Chemist+Druggist*, **Zeinab Ardeshir**, Superintendent Pharmacist and Co-founder of PillSorted, has called on the **Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)** to take urgent action to prevent these errors.

“We are seeing packs from different manufacturers carrying the same barcode. It means that a simple scan no longer guarantees accuracy. Every pharmacist has to double-check by hand, and it’s a hidden safety risk that should not exist in 2025,” said Ardeshir.

“A single, enforceable fix would solve this nationwide: making the GTIN barcode part of the medicine’s marketing authorisation file. That would give manufacturers and regulators joint responsibility for accuracy, protecting patients and saving pharmacies thousands of hours in manual checks.”

Ardeshir and her team have launched an open campaign at barcode.pillsorted.com, documenting real examples of barcode mismatches and calling for public support. The campaign urges the MHRA to make accurate GTINs a mandatory component of medicine approval in the UK.

The issue affects every community pharmacy, hospital, and dispensing system using scan-to-label or digital checking workflows. While individual pharmacists routinely catch these discrepancies before harm occurs, experts warn that relying on human vigilance is not sustainable in a system handling millions of packs each week.

The campaign has already attracted strong engagement across the pharmacy sector, with calls for NHS England, GS1 UK, and MHRA to collaborate on enforcement standards.

About PillSorted

PillSorted is a Cambridge-based digital healthcare service providing high-precision medication management and treatment pathways for patients across the UK. Founded by clinicians, including pharmacists and doctors, the company combines technology with clinical care to improve medication safety and adherence. PillSorted works seamlessly across NHS and private care, adapting to how patients access treatment.

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