

A hard nut cracked: the scanning and recognition of medical prescriptions in pharmacies

ASYS

Pharmacy-owned company ASYS was founded in 1982 and is one of the most renowned producers of IT systems for pharmacies. ASYS provides its users many advantages by using IT systems. Examples are PharmaComp as the first POS system for pharmacies, the first client or multi pharmacy system, the first linking between doctors and pharmacists, the label-free pharmacy and automating functions of IT systems.



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The way in which medical prescriptions are issued and processed has been subject to a number of improvements during the course of the years. With the introduction of computers into most doctors' surgeries, the problem of deciphering the GP's handwriting has largely been banished. One significant problem that remains, however, is the electronic processing of prescriptions by pharmacies. The latest healthcare reforms aim not only for the efficient processing of all prescriptions, they also require that prescription-related data be available in electronic format. The linking up of surgery computers with related pharmacies' computer systems is currently simply not feasible, and therefore the only solution up until now has been the manual entry and processing of both patient- and prescription data. However, another

solution is now available in the form of SMARTscan, a software program developed by ASYS Softwareentwicklung GmbH that allows the electronic processing of prescriptions by pharmacies.

Based on the form processing solution, ABBYY FormReader, the program, in addition to retaining an image of the prescription, also recognises and saves its contents. The software can read the prescription and integrate the information gathered into the pharmacy's own computer system. This offers both pharmacists and patients a number of advantages.

The storage of patient-related data, which requires the patient's agreement, offers them the advantage that medicines issued during the previous few weeks are checked for any possible side-effects in relation to other medicines about to be handed over. Patients also benefit, for example, when a manufacturer decides to recall a certain product as the pharmacy can immediately get in touch with the patients to whom it has been issued.

Of significant advantage to the pharmacist is the fact that adhering to the Autdem rule, which lays down that the cheapest form of medicine belong to a particular class should always be prescribed, is made easier as the database is always kept up to date. Similarly, adhering to government regulations regarding reimported medicines is also facilitated, along with the monitoring of prescription validity dates. In addition, the time needed to be spent on product warehousing when using an automatic product storage unit is reduced to a minimum, and the maintenance of the customer database is greatly facilitated, with statistics able to be issued at the touch of a button, without any additional work on the part of the user.

For the software to be effective, data recognition must be quick and error-free. Medical data represents extremely sensitive information, and no errors should be permitted if at all possible. ABBYY FormReader fulfils both these requirements, being both extremely reliable and quick. In addition, it proved easy to integrate into ASYS' application, so that ASYS is now able to offer its customers an efficient all-in-one end-solution.

The completed forms are then scanned and compared to their respective template. FormReader automatically identifies which fields have been completed, recognises the information contained within them and verifies the recognised data. The data can be corrected manually if necessary, before being stored in a database or exported to an information management system

More information about ABBYY at www.abbyy.com

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