

# France

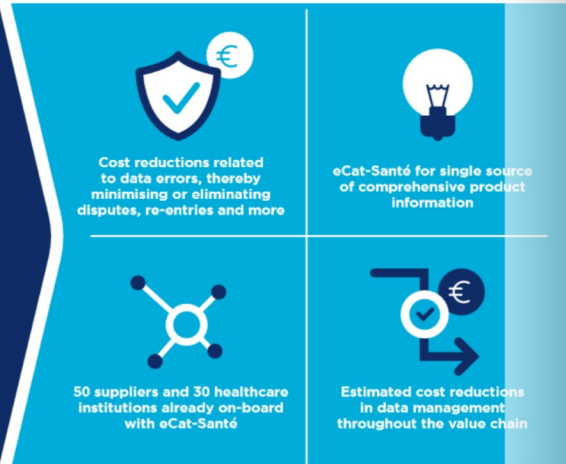
## Digitise healthcare product information to improve procurement and supply chain management

### Challenge

As a public purchasing organisation, Resah aims to facilitate access to the ordering, management and identification of products exchanged between hospitals and manufacturers. For global consistency, it is essential to share global information on products directly from manufacturers to hospitals, using a single format.

### Approach

To support manufacturers and hospitals in the digitisation of product information, Resah implemented the first interoperable electronic catalogue for the French health sector: eCat-Santé. Based on GS1 standards, this catalogue enables the input and output of comprehensive, standardised and up-to-date product information. The solution provides a win-win by reducing the time and costs associated with product information management.



Today, French hospitals are challenged by new regulations such as European Union's Falsified Medicines Directive (EU-FMD), Unique Device Identification (UDI) and more—with requirements to uniquely identify all healthcare products. As a result, pharmacists and hospitals need reliable and complete trade item data for greater knowledge about the products they use in order to improve patient safety.

Created in 2007, Resah is a major public Group Purchasing Organisation (GPO) that leverages the purchasing power of hospitals and nursing homes in France, with over 4,000 public contracts covering all healthcare procurement fields.

After a successful proof of concept, Resah is now leveraging the GS1 Global Data Synchronisation Network™ (GDSN®) to enable manufacturers to send trusted data to its platform called eCat-Santé. Ultimately, eCat-Santé will cover not only medical devices and pharmaceutical drugs, but any product that Resah contracts for hospitals in France.

The eCat-Santé solution is expected to save time and money for hospitals and pharmacies, while ensuring increased data quality and improved

patient safety. The solution will also allow suppliers to share their updated data with all healthcare users in France, to receive orders based on registered product codes that can easily be integrated in hospitals' IT systems, and to share the product references in a secure environment.

### Introducing eCat-Santé

Healthcare professionals need complete and accurate data related to healthcare products for efficient processes—order-to-cash, inventory management and dispensing of the products they use every day. In fact, data quality is especially critical when it comes to ensuring the quality of patient care and safety. For more than 10 years, French hospitals have been aware of this need and have tried multiple times to synchronise product information with suppliers and points of care.

For several years, suppliers have had to provide more and more information about their products (e.g., instructions, codes, descriptions, sizes) in formats specific to each of their customers. Gathering, managing and sending these data in proprietary formats has

required significant time and money for the medical device and pharmaceutical companies.

Resah, working in a dematerialised way with healthcare institutions and suppliers, has several goals:

- Anticipate the transformation linked to the dematerialisation and traceability of healthcare products in compliance with regulations (e.g., UDI, EU-FMD, public procurement regulations).
- Ensure that hospitals have access to reliable and integrated product information at a very low cost.
- Secure the process via internationally recognised standards.

At the end of September 2020, Resah launched eCat-Santé, its first e-catalogue, developed with @GP, a solution provider. The catalogue is based on GS1 standards, recognised by the profession and defined in close collaboration with a multi-professional working group. eCat-Santé offers product information directly sourced and updated by manufacturers—providing a secure database that guarantees healthcare providers a comprehensive knowledge database for the traceability of healthcare products.

### Implementing eCat-Santé

The eCat-Santé system brings together different stakeholders on one single platform. eCat-Santé's objective is to improve the reliability and consistency of data in the various healthcare information systems.



**Launched in September 2020, more than 50 suppliers, including 12 suppliers via the GDSN, and 45,000 product records are shared with eCat-Santé.**

**More than 20 hospitals have already applied to eCat-Santé, which is planned for opening to healthcare institutions in November 2021.**

Resah started the development of eCat-Santé by creating a task force with the different stakeholders, focusing on issues related to the quality of end-to-end product information. The group included representatives from:

- Medical device manufacturers - B.Braun, Bio-Rad, Vygon
- Pharmaceutical company - Roche
- Pharmaceutical database - CIP
- Hospital pharmacists - Hospitals of Argenteuil, Saint-Denis and Groupement Hospitalier de l'Est Francilien
- Medical service of the French Army - Service de Santé des Armées
- GS1 France

The objective of the task force was to collect users' needs that would conform to regulatory prerequisites, with the aim of getting responses from healthcare providers.

Once these prerequisites were established, Resah launched a call for tender in order to choose a solution provider that would support the technical development of the solution. The solution provider selected was @GP.

The eCat-Santé solution was launched in September 2020 to include medical devices and pharmaceutical products, the first products in scope. Today, more than 50 suppliers, including 12 suppliers via the GDSN, and 45,000 product records have been shared with eCat-Santé. More than 20 hospitals have already applied to eCat-Santé, which is planned for opening to healthcare institutions in November 2021.

Resah also intends to leverage eCat-Santé by opening it to other sectors such as catering in mid-2021.

### Leveraging GS1 standards

For increased adoption by all stakeholders, eCat-Santé is based on several GS1 standards:

- GS1 global identifiers include the Global Trade Item Number® (GTIN®) and Global Location Number (GLN).
- GS1 data models for pharmaceutical products and medical devices include sharing data via the GDSN.
- The GS1 data model gathers product information in families and covers 160 attributes, to include product identification, packaging information, purchase order, marketing, prices / taxes, health / reimbursement, medical device or pharmaceutical, and danger.

The eCat-Santé solution is now integrated into Resah's application system and will enable the communication between several applications, in particular those associated

with enterprise resource planning (ERP), to ensure the consistency of product references, the healthcare provider's website to enable enhancements of online product information, and the supplier's web portal to ensure the proper digitisation of the purchasing process, from order to invoice.

### One catalogue for all

The catalogue enables suppliers to provide and share product information in a single format. There are two available ways of sending information to eCat-Santé: (See Figure 1.)

- GDSN: Suppliers that have a data pool and product information management (PIM) software can directly share their product information with eCat-Santé. A link between the manufacturer and eCat-Santé has been set up by @GP, enabling the manufacturer to directly send data. The use of GDSN has proven to be an efficient way to share large product catalogues and to save time for manufacturers, Resah and healthcare providers.
- eCat-Santé suppliers web portal: Suppliers without PIM can use the supplier portal, structured in a GS1 format. The data can then be compiled manually or by importing via comma-separated values (CSV) files.

Resah receives the product information and improves it with tendering information, to

include the tender number, and the start and end dates of the tender.

For hospitals, eCat-Santé provides a centralised data source for all healthcare professionals: pharmacists, purchasing assistants, logisticians and others. Therefore, everyone has access to the data they need on a daily basis.

Two access points are available for hospitals. (See Figure 1.)

*"Healthcare products are available in numerous references to specifically meet the needs of patients, according to their size, gender or age."*

*"As a result, manufacturers have to manage catalogues that include several hundred or even several thousand references."*

*The GDSN has proven its efficiency by allowing Resah suppliers to load such catalogues on eCat-Santé in only a few weeks, mobilising teams with lead times of less than two or three days."*

Stéphane Ancel,  
IT Editor, @GP

## eCat Santé operating mode

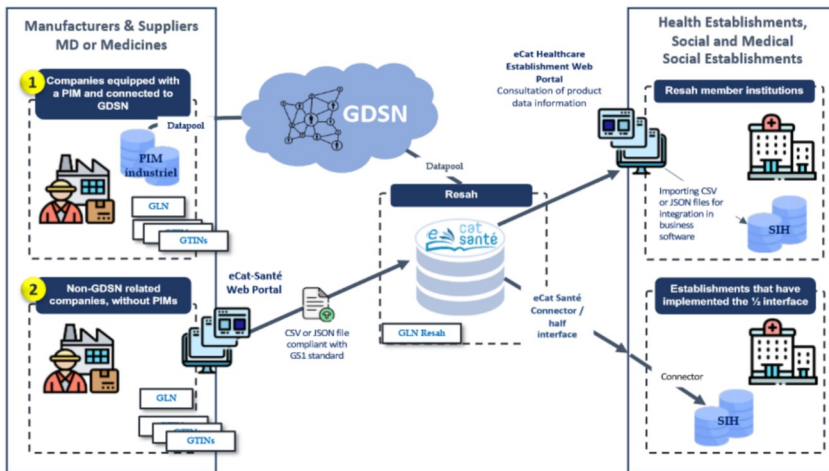


Figure 1: eCat-Santé operating model

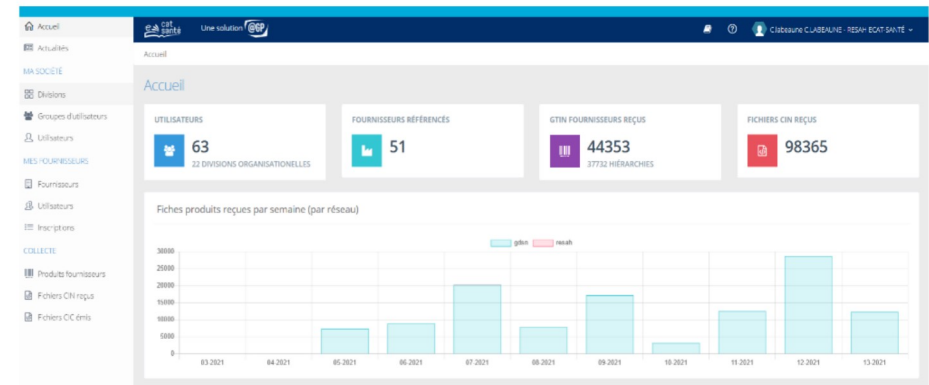


Figure 2: eCat-Santé dashboard

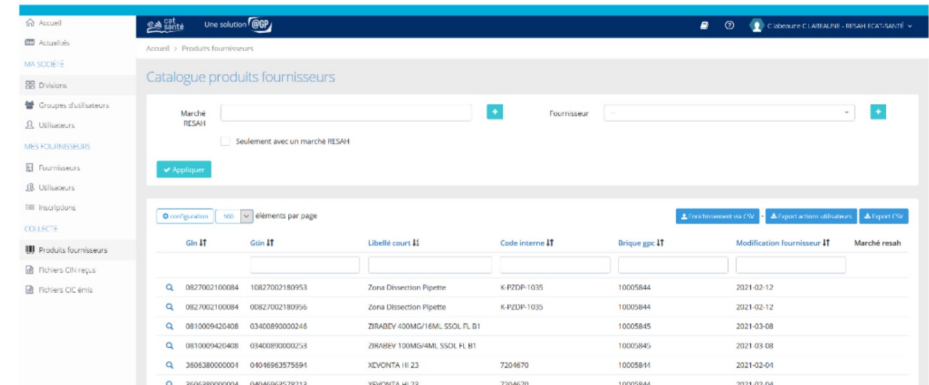


Figure 3: eCat-Santé product list

*"It was essential for us to enable the healthcare industry in France to share standardised product data in the most efficient and global way as possible, avoiding the use of proprietary data formats. The choice of the GDSN network gives us the opportunity to add a value proposition in the use of eCat-Santé for manufacturers."*

Camille Labeaune,  
Project Manager, Resah

### Supporting manufacturers' digitalisation

Several webinars dedicated to eCat-Santé help to promote the use of the solution by suppliers. Since August 2020, different Resah calls for tender have included clauses requiring contract holders to provide eCat-Santé with information on selected products. Uploading data into eCat-Santé is free-of-charge for suppliers that are under contract with Resah.

Convinced that eCat-Santé is a solution that will allow healthcare institutions to better know and manage their products, suppliers are also using

eCat-Santé as a showcase for their entire product catalogue. Suppliers that do not have a contract with Resah can also use the catalogue under specific conditions.

### Digitising information management in hospitals

The eCat-Santé catalogue will allow medical device suppliers to share their internal codes as well as their UDI codes for all their product catalogues. The use of these two identification systems, for both supply codes (e.g., order, dematerialised exchanges) and regulatory codes (e.g., traceability), will enable healthcare institutions to ensure compliance with the UDI regulation, which commenced in May 2021. Beyond that, eCat-Santé is built for the data expected in the European database for medical devices (EUDAMED) and will allow hospitals to enhance health product data directly from their IT systems. Healthcare institutions are also supported through eCat-Santé webinars that introduce and teach them how to use the solution.

*"eCat-Santé concerns the standardisation of logistic practices for the supply of medical products in different hospitals, working with Resah in order to optimise the execution of the contracts signed with the suppliers. As a consequence, this leads to better sustainability, time savings for healthcare practitioners and a lower number of errors in order processing."*

**Jean-Michel Descoutures,**  
Hospital Pharmacist, Argenteuil Hospital

### Next steps

For the future, Resah intends to offer healthcare organisations global coverage of all the products they use daily. Thus, Resah is already offering eCat-Santé for other sectors such as catering, textile, general services and more. The availability of the solution for the food industry is planned for mid-2021 in order to meet the tender schedule of the central purchasing organisation. The FMCG and out-of-home catering data models defined by GS1 France are already configured on eCat-Santé and are waiting for suppliers to complete their data.

### Multiple benefits

Resah wants to reduce as much as possible the management costs associated with the data produced for suppliers and hospitals.

By using the eCat-Santé electronic catalogue, suppliers will be able to:

- Control the data transmitted to healthcare institutions.
- Enable the automation of transmitting data to everyone simultaneously.
- Receive order forms with recognised and updated codes.
- Minimise returns due to data errors.

The advantages for manufacturers are also important. A standard data model enables them to reduce the number of product record formats sent to their customers. Above all, manufacturers can control their own data.

For healthcare providers, eCat-Santé provides a way to:

- Secure the circulation of health products, thanks to reliable data.
- Provide access to exhaustive, standardised and updated product information without manual input into their information systems.
- Facilitate the integration of pricing data from notified contracts.

The French Army health system and many other institutions already use eCat-Santé for increased knowledge of healthcare products.

### Conclusion

Resah hopes to involve more and more manufacturers and healthcare providers in eCat-Santé. By mid-2021, the GPO plans to launch the first eCat-Santé User Group, opening the possibility for everyone to improve the solution.

The promotion of a direct connection with hospital information systems is dependent on hospital solution providers. Resah also plans to use the data produced in its own IT systems by interfacing its e-commerce website and its supplier e-portal with eCat-Santé.

### About the authors



**Camille Labeaune,**  
Project Manager, Resah

Camille Labeaune is a project manager for supplier relationship transformation at Resah, with six years of experience in data quality management. She leads projects aimed at improving the performance of purchasing activities in hospitals.

Ms. Labeaune leads the eCat-Santé project, organising healthcare stakeholders and working to harmonise and optimise data management related to healthcare products (pharmaceuticals and medical devices) in hospitals.

Ms. Labeaune is a biomedical and informatical engineer graduated from the Ecole Centrale Electronique of Paris.



**Stéphane Ancel,**  
IT Editor, @GP

In the health area for 20 years, Stéphane Ancel has held various positions in the management and optimisation of hospital organisations. He first managed private hospitals and then joined the purchasing sector by working for several purchasing groups.

It is within the framework of purchasing that Mr. Ancel focused on the development of new technologies and digitalisation, which is lagging behind in the health sector compared to other sectors of activity, by deploying an EDI platform on behalf of the health institutions of the Mutualité Française.

Based on his strong experience in these different areas, Mr. Ancel joined @GP as the IT Editor, specialising in EDI to develop applications and enable the development of digitalised purchases.



**Jean-Michel Descoutures,**  
Hospital Pharmacist,  
Argenteuil Hospital

Jean-Michel Descoutures is a hospital pharmacist, currently working in the Pharmacy department of Argenteuil Hospital in France. He joined the "Réseau des acheteurs hospitaliers" (Resah) in 2007, one of the major group purchasing organisations for hospitals in France. Because of his knowledge on how medications come on the market and how the price is established by the authorities, he has been appointed coordinator for the procurement of pharmaceuticals for over 100 hospitals, including the military hospitals.

Mr. Descoutures is part of the executive board of the "Club des Acheteurs de Produits de Santé," which is an association where all different public and private GPOs can discuss their issues regarding the environment of procurement of health products. In 2009, he was elected a Member of the French Academy of Pharmacy.

Mr. Descoutures represents the International Hospital Federation (IHF) on the leadership team of GS1 Healthcare.

### About the organisation



**Resah - Réseau des Acheteurs Hospitaliers** - is a public group purchasing organisation in France that supports high performance for all actors in the healthcare, medico-social and social sectors, thanks to mutualisation and professionalisation of purchasing and logistical activities. Its activities are organised around two major areas of services: a purchasing group and a resource and expertise centre.

[www.resah.fr](http://www.resah.fr)