SUREPHARM BENEFITS FROM FAST CHANGEOVERS ON THE UHLMANN BLISTER LINE BEC 300

As a one-stop provider, Surepharm Services Ltd. in Burton on Trent, UK, specialises in the contract manufacturing of generic and branded formulations. The company produces and packages approximately one billion tablets and hard shell capsules for the human and veterinary sectors annually.

Surepharm has been very successful since its foundation in 1990, recording steady growth. To ensure that the packaging capacities keep pace with this development, Surepharm decided on the purchase of an Uhlmann Blister line BEC 300 in 2014. “We were particularly impressed by the quality workmanship of the line, the fast format changeovers, and the user-friendliness. The productivity since commissioning is very pleasing”, states Julian Richardson, Managing Director at Surepharm.

As a contract manufacturer, Surepharm required a blister line enabling quick, easy, and reliable format changeovers, because the plan was to package at least ten medicines in varying pack sizes on the new equipment. During its visit to the trade fair interpack 2014, Surepharm decided in favour of the Blister line BEC 300 from Uhlmann Pac-Systeme GmbH & Co. KG. It combines a blister and a cartoner module on a compact footprint. “Everything simply fitted: the overall impression and the line output, the simple operation and cleaning, and, furthermore, Uhlmann’s good reputation”, recalls Julian Richardson. Surepharm supplemented the BEC 300 with a Stretch-banding machine S 3015. The blister line has meanwhile been in operation in England since late 2014.

Format Changeover in Less than 30 Minutes

The fast format changeover on the BEC 300 primarily influenced the decision-making process. A three-dimensional format changeover can be carried out in less than 30 minutes. Only a few light-weight tools have to be exchanged. Fewer format parts mean fewer work steps, which saves time, and the follow-up costs are lower. This is possible because various functions,
such as blister transfer to the cartoner module, need no format-related parts. What is more, resetting is carried out without any special tools. The new format parts are simply inserted and positioned. “Time spent on resetting is unproductive. That is why we want to keep it as short as possible. The Blister line BEC 300 does justice to this. It offers faster and easier product changeovers compared to other lines we operate. In addition to being very user-friendly, operation is sound and reliable”, explains the Surepharm Managing Director.

Other positive aspects are the design and extremely smooth surfaces, which make cleaning particularly straightforward. The BEC 300 is well laid out and generally accessible from the operating side. “Obviously, our other machines comply with GMP design specifications, but the Uhlmann line stands out favourably in this respect. This saves time during line clearance and enhances reliability”, adds Julian Richardson.

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User-Friendliness Pays Off

The operating system also contributes to the fast format changeovers and smooth production. One person can centrally control all the standard and additional components of the line via one touchscreen. Intuitive operation simplifies the familiarisation process for operators, which facilitates flexible personnel planning.

Efficient End-of-Line Packaging

Uhlmann integrated the Stretch-banding machine S 3015 downstream from the BEC 300. The interchanging of parts on the S 3015 is not necessary, so changeovers are fast. Material consumption of the stretch-banding machine is also efficient: waste is minimised as it makes optimum use of the film. Surepharm values the reliability and line expertise offered by Uhlmann. Julian Richardson comments, “All the components come from a single source and are perfectly attuned. In my opinion, this contributes significantly to the high quality of the packaging and the productivity of the line.”

High Speed and Flexibility

The maximum output of the blister line is 300 blisters and 150 cartons per minute. Producing blisters up to 95 x 145 millimetres in size and handling cartons up to 115 x 90 x 150 millimetres in size, the BEC 300 can process all standard types of solid dose products, forming materials, cartons, and patient information. The development of appropriate format parts for
The installation, including qualification, was completed on schedule and as budgeted. The feedback from Surepharm was correspondingly positive. “Uhlmann implemented the project efficiently and reliably, down to the last detail. Service and technical support are first-rate. This also applies, for instance, when we develop new products or need new tools. Competent and motivated Uhlmann employees are ready to assist”, Julian Richardson reports positively. On these grounds, he also recommends Uhlmann to other pharmaceutical manufacturers and allows his line to be used as an Uhlmann reference installation for the United Kingdom. “We are very satisfied overall. The BEC 300 will certainly not be the last Uhlmann line at Surepharm”, concludes Richardson.

Surepharm Line as a UK Reference Installation
The company was supported by Adam Gundy, Sales Manager at Uhlmann UK Ltd., from the outset: “Surepharm was quick and explicit in its decisions. As a result we managed to ensure prompt delivery and commissioning of the line.

Specially shaped solid dose products is also offered by Uhlmann in close cooperation with the pharmaceutical manufacturer. The option of other feeders is also no problem. In view of its diverse range of contracts, this flexibility pays off as far as Surepharm is concerned. “We are already packaging a broad variety of tablets and hard shell capsules on the BEC 300, in some cases as child-resistant blisters. No matter what lies ahead, we are well equipped with the new blister line”, Richardson is confident.

Julian Richardson, Managing Director at Surepharm, is very pleased with the BEC 300 and allows the line to be used as an Uhlmann reference installation for the United Kingdom.