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## Innovators in Pharmacy: Parata Goes GREEN

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*Technology Innovator Lands First-Ever GREENGUARD Certification for Pharmacy Automation Equipment*

*Editor's Note: This is an excerpt of a series of articles in which Pharmacy Times will look at companies taking innovative approaches in the pharmacy marketplace. For a longer article on Parata's innovations, look for our upcoming July cover story.*

Almost from the day Parata Systems LLC (Durham, NC) entered the automated dispensing market with a bang in 2001, the company has established itself as an industry leader. The company's core dispensing systems—the RDS, the Max, and the Mini—now appear in thousands of pharmacies nationwide, and the products have introduced a host of innovations designpharmacyed to make the pharmacists' job easier and safer.

Today, Parata and the GREENGUARD Environmental Institute (GEI) announced that the Parata RDS has been granted the first-ever GREENGUARD Indoor Air Quality Certification for pharmacy automation equipment. For those who are not aware, GEI is an independent, nonprofit organization that seeks to protect human health and quality of life through programs that improve the indoor air that people breathe. The program relies on comprehensive third-party standards to establish and maintain the measurable that certified products must achieve.

Seeking the certification was a bold move; it had never been done in the pharmacy arena before. Companies in other industries have found that certification is no walk in the park. "About 60% of the products we see initially cannot meet the standards," says GEI founder Marilyn Black, PhD. "It's a pretty high bar. What we find for many manufacturers when they first approach us about evaluation is that they don't know what they're getting into. They don't understand what impact their product has on the environment."

GEI was established in 2001, and it was initially focused on testing building materials and furnishings for commercial spaces. "We learned years ago that the indoor air can be much dirtier than outdoor air," says Black. "There has been a push to improve air quality for the people who live and work in it. Nothing is more important to a person's health than the air that they breathe."

Parata reached out to GEI late last year, wondering if the organization had established standards that would be applicable to their dispensing products. Black jumped at the chance. "Health care is one of our target environments, because people are in that environment because they have a health concern," Black says. "You not only have employees, but you have customers and patients. They may already be immune-compromised, so they may be very sensitive to the environment and what they're exposed to. We believed that certifying this type of product would be very positive for the market and health care environments overall."

In an exclusive interview with *Pharmacy Times*, Parata executive vice president of customer and market strategies Tom Rhoads talked about the process and why the company sought the certification. "Safety has always been a major tenet of any technology we roll out," he says. "GREENGUARD was a natural next step for us. We've seen a major green emergence recently, and we've been thinking about how to validate the safety of our equipment in the marketplace."

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The rigorous certification process involved testing in a completely controlled environment, at levels beyond the capacity of a typical pharmacy. According to Rhoads, most pharmacies process around 200 to 300 prescriptions per day; GEI tested the air quality around the RDS at a rate of 1000 prescriptions per day.

"This certification is a natural extension of our safety practices," says Rhoads. "Obviously we're very excited. We hope that the industry looks at this and follows our lead. For the good of the patients, everyone should be pursuing these types of certifications to be sure they're not affecting the air quality in any way, especially as pharmacies morph into a health center versus just a place to pick up their prescription."

"This is something that's becoming almost a prerequisite in today's environment," says Black. "If you want to put a product in green, sustainable environments that are developing today, you have to have your product qualified to meet this standard. Many manufacturers have to go back and change things because they can't pass. With Parata, it was our understanding when they came forward that they appear to be an innovative leadership type of company that was looking to step out in a leadership role. They realized that they would be the first to be certified in this particular product category. We also like to see that, because our experience is that it is the leadership companies that have the forward vision to take these steps to qualify."

**Additional resources:**

GREENGUARD News Release: <http://news.prnewswire.com>

GREENGUARD Web site: [www.greenguard.org](http://www.greenguard.org)

Parata Web site: [www.parata.com](http://www.parata.com)

Indoor air quality standards: [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

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