

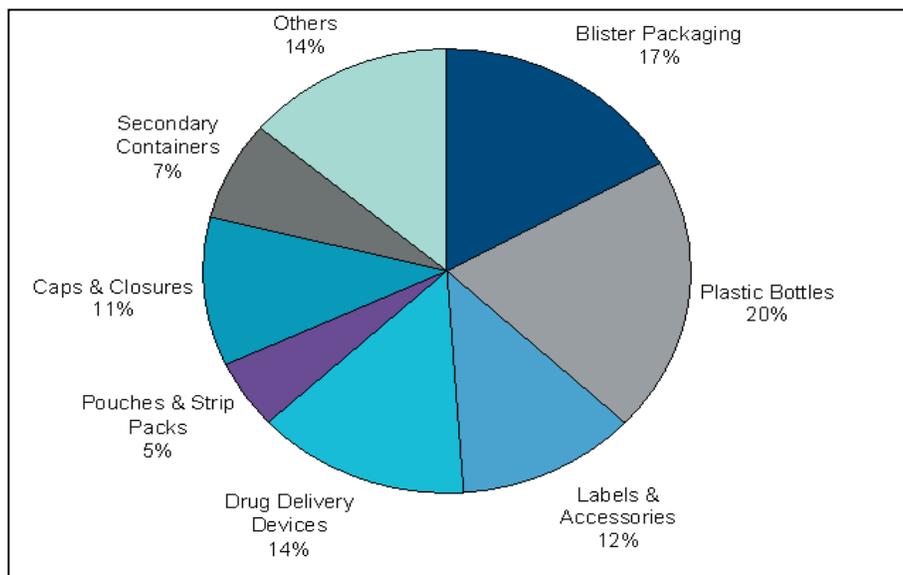
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## Four Reasons for the Rise in Blister Packaging

Blister packaging, not long ago considered a less significant segment of the North American pharmaceutical packaging industry, is now outpacing most other industry segments. In 2010, blister represented 17% of the global market and recorded \$8.1 billion in revenue, according to Pharmaceutical Packaging Industry – 2011 Yearbook. GBI Research. Impressive figures, yet they represent merely the low end of blister's growth curve. The yearbook data also projects that between 2010 and 2017, blister packs are expected to emerge as the second-fastest-growing sector.

### Pharmaceutical Packaging Market, Global, Market Share by Industry, 2010



Source: GBI Research, Company Websites

Four factors are driving blister to the forefront of pharmaceutical packaging, and at an even faster rate than its current growth.

**Product Protection.** Blister packaging's level of product safety makes it an increasingly practical

option, one that satisfies the demands of manufacturers, regulatory organizations and consumers. Individual tablets or capsules are sealed within their own cavity, usually made of thermo-formed plastic or cold-form aluminum, protecting the drug from contaminants such as moisture and oxygen by a barrier of foil, film or paperboard. Forming of the blister, filling with product and sealing it are all completed on one machine for minimal exposure to external influences which can alter the properties of the drug. Ideally, this process occurs in a controlled production environment for a maximum level of protection.

**Product Integrity.** This same protection improves product integrity and extends its shelflife. Consider that most consumers store their drugs in bathrooms where temperatures and humidity can be harmful to unprotected drugs. Unlike with the use of bottles, which are opened and closed by consumers multiple times, exposure to compromising elements occurs in blisters only when the protective barrier is broken and a single tablet or capsule is dispensed and administered. Blisters accommodate printing of key information, such as expiration date and lot number, on each blister back, so even if secondary packaging is discarded consumers maintain access to this important data.

**Features Baby Boomers Want.** Data collected by the US Census Bureau indicate that by 2030 there will be nearly 58 million people aged 66-84 living in the United States. Add in similar Canadian population projections and it is easy to establish that this age group, which consumes a far greater number of OTC and pharmacy-dispensed drugs than others do, will impact the North American pharmaceutical manufacturing and packaging industries.

Baby Boomers have clear-cut expectations which align with the characteristics offered by blister packaging. As an example, they want convenient, portable unit dosing of medications and supplements rather than bottles, for they continue to be a generation on the go. They expect packaging to be discreet and prefer blister for its subtlety. They benefit from day and time labeling on blisters which improves their adherence to daily dosing protocols. Easy-to-open blister packs are a welcome alternative for those who have difficulty opening bottles or vials.

**Improved Patient Compliance and Dosing Accuracy.** Strengthening compliance rates is a goal of the pharmaceutical industry, and blister packaging has been shown to have a positive effect on patient compliance and medication adherence. When drugs are packaged in blisters, adherence is improved because consumers are better able to keep track of their medications and dosing. The unit dose feature

of blisters reduces the risk of incorrect dosing, Accurate dosing is further improved with compliance or calendar packs. On a larger scale, barcodes printed on blister packs bring a significant safeguard to hospitals and nursing care facilities by facilitating a reduction in the level of error in medication distribution.

As blister packaging is forecast to grow as a dominant packaging sector, pharma as well as consumer health-care companies hoping to expand their market share are well-advised to examine their current method of packaging. Moving to, or increasing the use of, blister packaging can better satisfy regulatory agencies as well as consumers for sustainable growth.

*By Paul Dupont*

*Paul Dupont is Director of Business Development North America for Ropack, Inc., a contract packaging services provider for the pharmaceutical and consumer health-care industries. Operating in nearly 250,000 square feet, Ropack offers turnkey primary and secondary pharmaceutical packaging services of solid oral dosage and operates ambient and refrigerated manufacturing, packaging and warehousing space, providing temperature-monitored distribution services to wholesale distribution networks, physicians and clinical study sites in Canada and the U.S. Dupont has more than 20 years experience launching new business development initiatives in the food, pharmaceutical and consumer health-care industries and expanding market presence to new geographic territories.*