

The advent of the Torbal two-step pill counting system, for establishing the average piece weights of pills, combined with the 2D barcode label on all drug supply bottles, has led to the creation of a Pharmacy Cooperative where pharmacies agree to share a common database of average piece weights which are stored on a central server provided by Fulcrum Inc. Each member pharmacy has access to a central database of average pill weights stored by NDC code and lot number. Each member agrees to be the provider of average piece weight information when they encounter a new NDC code and lot number combination until the system provides that information.

In this way, each member has a fully updated average piece weight database based upon the latest lot number (and older lot numbers) for every drug used by members. This system stores multiple average piece weights for each drug based upon lot numbers. This means that members needn't worry about a supply bottles information becoming obsolete. This system is very fast and very accurate. It competes quite favorably with robotic systems in the pill counting function, but at a fraction of the cost.

The system requires that at least three different pharmacies must enter average piece weights for the new lot number and that the weights be the same to within a very tight tolerance before this system will accept the new average piece weight (the mean weight of the three provided) and post it on the server. If the three average piece weights do not meet the system requirement it will continue to accumulate information about the average piece weight until it is satisfied that it has the correct value. For instance, the system may require that five of the first six average piece weights meet the tight tolerance criteria, and then establish an average piece weight based upon the five good weights.

The two-step process for establishing average piece weights, provided by Torbal scales, has greatly sped up the procedure, and eliminated the need for the pharmacist to count out samples manually. These scales rely upon a local server that stores a central database. It is these local servers that communicate with the Cooperative Server to obtain the latest average piece weight database information. Each pharmacy is fully capable of continued operation in the event that the Cooperative Server is unavailable. Each pharmacy pays a small monthly fee for the cooperative service in return for which they are almost completely free of the need to establish their own average piece weights for each new lot number of a drug. Information about the speed and accuracy of the system is available at www.torbalscales.com.