UPS Partners With Matternet To Transport Medical Samples Via Drone Across Hospital System In Raleigh, N.C.

26-03-2019

UPS (NYSE:UPS) today announced a groundbreaking new logistics service to deliver medical samples via unmanned drones through a collaboration with Matternet, a leader in autonomous drone technology. The program is taking place at WakeMedâ€™s flagship hospital and campus in the Raleigh, N.C., metropolitan area, with oversight by the Federal Aviation Administration and North Carolina Department of Transportation. Todayâ€™s flight marks the beginning of numerous planned daily revenue flights at the WakeMed Raleigh campus.

The UPS and Matternet program represents a major milestone for unmanned aviation in the United States. Currently, the majority of medical samples and specimens are transported across WakeMed's expanding health system by courier cars. The addition of drone transport provides an option for on-demand and same-day delivery, the ability to avoid roadway delays, increase medical delivery efficiency, lower costs and improve the patient experience with potentially life-saving benefits.

NCDOT, which is working to leverage drones to expand healthcare access for the residents of North Carolina, supported Matternet in conducting first-round test flights using Matternet's drone technology on WakeMed's campus in August 2018 as part of the FAA's Unmanned Aircraft System Integration Pilot Program (IPP). The three-year FAA program aims to test practical applications of drones by partnering local governments with private sector companies to learn more about how this emerging technology can be safely and usefully integrated into day-to-day activities. The five IPP partners involved are the FAA, NCDOT, UPS, Matternet, and WakeMed.

The program will utilize Matternet's M2 quadcopter, which is powered by a rechargeable lithium-ion battery, and can carry medical payloads weighing up to about 5 lbs. over distances of up to 12.5 miles.

Throughout the WakeMed program, a medical professional will load a secure drone container with a medical sample or specimen – such as a blood sample – at one of WakeMed's nearby facilities. The drone will fly along a predetermined flight path, monitored by a specially trained Remote Pilot-in-Command (RPIC), to a fixed landing pad at

WakeMed's main hospital and central pathology lab. This will be an ongoing program at WakeMed, and UPS and Matternet will use the learnings to consider how drones can be applied to improve transport services at other hospitals and medical facilities across the U.S.

Enhancing the UPS Global Smart Logistics Network to support hospitals and other healthcare organizations remains a key element of the company's transformation strategy. Healthcare and life science logistics is a priority segment for UPS, and the company is building new relationships and technologies to deliver better patient care with streamlined logistics and supply chain.

This collaboration is the latest UPS program to utilize drone flights in support of healthcare logistics. UPS partnered with GAVI and Zipline in 2016 to deliver blood products to remote locations in Rwanda. The Matternet team has already completed more than 3,000 flights for healthcare systems in Switzerland.

Source: UPS

CLASSIFICATION: CORPORATE | WWW.IPC.BE © 2026