

Practice e-Health

Electronic Prescribing

To assist many of our physicians who have not yet transitioned to electronic prescribing in their practice, this is the first of three articles to appear in Practice e-Health that will provide a broad overview of the information and tools available to understand, select and implement e-prescribing. This article also discusses the financial support and incentives that are available to our physicians for e-prescribing.

Practice e-Health will summarize pertinent information and present key points in the following three installments:

- Basic overview of available e-prescribing technology (this article)
- E-Prescribing II, geared to offices ready to move forward with implementation. The article will offer assistance in assessing practice readiness, selecting a product that meets the needs of your practice and associated costs for implementation
- E-Prescribing III, will focus on resources, references and tips to help streamline the transition, and guidance to insure success

What is E-Prescribing?

It is an electronic way to generate prescriptions through an automated data entry process utilizing e-prescribing software and a transmission network which links to participating pharmacies. Or quite simply, it is the totally electronic transmission of a prescription from the physician to a pharmacy's computer system.

What it is Not:

- Computer-generated faxing of prescriptions to pharmacies (this is not typically considered e-prescribing, although it is widely used today. Each state has different laws about how faxed prescriptions are handled; most states allow a practitioner to fax a prescription).
- Scanned prescriptions
- E-mailed prescriptions

What can E-Prescribing do?

- Allows a prescriber to electronically transmit a new prescription or refill authorization to a community or mail-order pharmacy (excluding controlled substances)
- Allows transmission of prescription-related information between a prescriber, dispenser, pharmacy benefit manager or health plan either directly or through an intermediary, including an e-prescribing network
- Includes, but not limited to, *two-way transmissions* between point of care and the dispenser
- Provides information related to the availability (if any) of therapeutically appropriate, lower cost alternatives
- Conducts safety checks related to potential inappropriate dose or route of administration, drug-drug interactions, allergy concerns, warnings, etc. and alerts the prescriber
- Provides information on authorization requirements, formulary or tiered formulary medications
- Generates a complete list of active medications received from pharmacies and pharmacy benefit managers

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Since some products marketed today do not offer all of the aforementioned capabilities, it is important to ask the vendor detailed questions regarding their product technology.

What are the Benefits for E-Prescribing?

For your Patients:

- Improved safety and quality of care through the reduction of medication errors caused by illegible prescriptions, oral miscommunications or lack of information sharing between other prescribing providers
- Reduced wait time at the pharmacy for refills, as well as elimination of a trip to drop off the prescription
- Lower cost drug substitutions at point of care can reduce patient costs, which may in turn help improve medication compliance
- Patients can continue to fill their prescriptions at their choice of pharmacy
- Since formulary issues are resolved at the time of prescribing, patients avoid unnecessary delays when obtaining their medications

For You and Your Staff:

- More time for patient care through the elimination of faxing and pharmacy call backs related to handwriting legibility, formulary/pharmacy benefits and resolution of other prescription issues
- Decision support is integrated into the prescription process
- Improved office workflow and efficiency
- Access to the patient's medication history from all providers at time of prescribing (however, there may be a delay in the availability of recently filled prescriptions. Not all systems include this feature)
- Save paper resources used for written or faxed prescriptions
- Improved convenience when a mobile device and wireless network are used
- Availability of information on when patients' prescriptions are filled can assist the practitioner to evaluate and address compliance issues
- Assists in increasing your generic use rate which is monitored by various health plans

Is there Financial and/or Other Support for E-Prescribing?

- St. John HealthPartners has identified Dr. First as its preferred stand-alone vendor. A discounted rate is available to SJHP physicians. Training and on-going support is provided by the SJHP Managed Care Department. Contact Bonnie Sysling-Salvador, RPh, at 586-753-0934 for further information
- Physicians belonging to SJHP's BCBSM PGIP group are eligible for financial incentives
- Beginning 2009, Medicare will provide physicians with a financial incentive for e-prescribing. Incentive payments will be 2% in 2009 and 2010, 1% in 2011 and 2012, and 0.5% in 2013. Beginning in 2012, Medicare payments to physicians **not** e-prescribing would be reduced by 1%, then 1.5% in 2013 and 2% in subsequent years. These requirements for participation are outlined in the January 2009 edition of the Informer
- SEMI (Southeast Michigan E-Prescribing Initiative) provides a financial incentive through SJHP. Primary Care Physicians and OB-GYNs using electronic prescribing are eligible for payment.