

What is E-prescribing and What are the benefits?

Written by Dr. Hazem El-Oraby

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E-prescribing has been described as the solution to improved patient safety and reducing sky-rocketing medication costs. It is estimated that approximately 7,000 deaths occur each year in the United States due to medication errors. These errors are predominately due to hand-writing illegibility, wrong dosing, missed drug-drug or drug-allergy reactions. With approximately 3 billion prescriptions written annually, which constitutes one of the largest paper-based processes in the United States, the writing of prescriptions can be streamlined and efficient by using an e-prescribing system.

Ursula Pennell from EMRConsultant.com writes an overview explaining some aspects of E-Prescription.



E-prescribing is simply 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.

Benefits of e-prescribing:

1) Improved patient safety and overall quality of care:

- Illegibility from hand-written prescriptions is eliminated, decreasing the risk of medication errors and decreasing liability risks.
- Warning and Alert systems are provided at the point of prescribing: It has been

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documented that medication errors are often the result of inadequate access to current drug reference information. E-prescribing systems can provide an overall medication management process through drug utilization review (DUR) programs. DUR programs perform checks against the patient's current medications for drug-drug interactions, drug-allergy interactions, diagnoses, body weight, age, drug appropriateness, correct dosing; contraindications, adverse reactions, duplicate therapy alert etc. and alerts the provider if interactions are found. E-prescribing software can also include such drug reference software programs as ePocrates Rx. Pro and the PDR.

- Access to patient's medical history. Knowing the patient's medical history at the time of prescribing can serve as an alert to drug inappropriateness.

2) Reduces or eliminates phone calls and call-backs to pharmacies. Physician offices receive over 150 million call-backs from pharmacies with questions, clarifications and refill requests. According to HIMSS article on e-prescribing under Topics and Tools at their website (http://www.himss.org/ASP/topics_eprescribing.asp) almost 30 percent of the 3 billion prescriptions written annually require a call backs. This equals 900 million prescription-related telephone calls annually¹. Medco® Health Solutions, Inc. conducted a survey in 2003 of Boston area physicians and 88 percent of those surveyed said they, or their staff, spend almost one-third of their time responding to phone calls from pharmacies regarding prescriptions. Medco reported that one practitioner in the survey indicated that in a time study of his four physician practice, the average phone call between a pharmacist and practitioner lasted eight minutes and was costing his practice more than \$200 per week in wasted staff time². These call-backs interrupt office flow and reduce productivity related to chart-pulls, re-filing charts, follow-up calls, faxing prescriptions etc.

3) Eliminates faxes to pharmacies.

4) Streamlines the refill's requests and authorization processes. Refill authorization from the pharmacy can be a completely automated process and refills can usually be generated in one click. The pharmacist generates a refill request/authorization that is delivered through the network to the provider's system, the provider then reviews the request, approves or denies the refill and the pharmacy system is immediately updated.

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http://www.emrconsultant.com/emr_ePrescribing.php