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E-Prescribing

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Does e-prescribing count towards Meaningful Use?

A: Yes, as long as certain criteria is met. The objective of the Meaningful Use e-prescribing measure is to generate and transmit permissible prescriptions electronically (e-prescribing). The Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) indicates the clinical importance as follows:

“Electronic prescribing (e-Prescribing or eRx) is a fast, efficient way to write/re-order and transmit prescriptions. eRx has pre-set fields so all the required information for prescriptions are entered and automatically stored in the patient’s record for easy review during follow-up visits or for transitions to other providers. e-Prescribing increases overall patient satisfaction because the prescriptions can be automatically transmitted to a pharmacy of preference. Using an electronic system also provides guided dose algorithms to assist providers. Providers also have the opportunity to query a formulary to ensure the drug selected is covered by the patient’s health plan to assist in reducing costs to the patient.”

To achieve Meaningful Use Stage 2, more than 50 percent of all permissible prescriptions written by eligible professionals must be compared to at least one drug formulary and transmitted using certified EHR technology.

Q: Do all pharmacies in Arizona accept electronically prescribed prescriptions?

A: Virtually all. Currently more than 98.5% of the pharmacies in Arizona are enabled to accept electronic prescriptions.

Q: Does e-prescribing help decrease prescription inaccuracy?

A: Yes. E-prescribing takes the guess work out of handwriting errors or illegibility. According to the FDA website, “Since 2000, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has received more than 95,000 reports of medication errors.... Medication errors occur for a variety of reasons. For example, miscommunications of drug orders can involve poor handwriting, confusion between drugs with similar names, poor packaging designs, and confusion of metric or other dosing units.”

Q: What are other ways e-prescribing helps with the safety of my patients?

A: By taking advantage of tools built into certified EHRs, prescribers can be alerted to allergies, duplications, drug-to-drug interactions and contraindications. Simply put, utilizing the EHR and e-prescribing provides the prescriber with additional information when treating their patients.



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Q: Will e-prescribing save me time?

A: Yes. A small investment in time pays off in increased efficiency. For example, favorite drug lists can be created within most EHR systems to make prescribing easier and faster. Additionally, reduction in transcription errors and access to patient formulary information at the time of prescribing can result in decreased time spent on the phone with pharmacies.

Q: Does e-prescribing save my patients time?

A: Yes. When a prescription is received by a pharmacy electronically it is typically expedited. Time is saved for the patient as their prescription can be filled prior to their arrival at the pharmacy.

Q: Is sending a prescription electronically safe?

A: Yes, if certified systems are utilized. Electronic prescriptions that are sent using certified technology are done so using private, secure and closed networks. Electronic prescription information is not sent over the open internet or as an email. Additionally, electronic prescriptions are much more secure than written prescriptions which can be tampered with, lost or stolen.

Q: Can controlled substances be electronically prescribed?

A: Yes. In 2010 the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) issued regulations permitting pharmacies to receive, dispense and archive electronic prescriptions. Then in April 2012, Arizona's governor signed into law legislation making e-prescribing of controlled substances (EPCS) legal in Arizona. For a prescriber to be able to EPCS they will need to acquire specialized software and a two-factor authentication device or process. Providers should contact their EHR vendor to become EPCS enabled.

Available Resources

Health Current can help with e-prescribing by answering questions and assisting you overcome any barriers you may encounter. Email erx@healthcurrent.org or call us at 602.688.7200.

Additional resources and reference information are also available at www.healthcurrent.org/information-center/e-prescribing/.