



## **Rx: Health Care FYI #3**

**Subject:** *Electronic Prescribing*  
**From:** *Rep. Tim Murphy (PA-18)*

*Over 7,000 people die and \$29 billion dollars are wasted every year due to medication errors alone. (Institute of Medicine, EHealth Initiative)*

### **What are Medication Errors?**

- Prescription errors are caused when prescriptions confuse the names of similar drugs, assign inappropriate dosage levels, issue redundant medications, or lead to harmful drug-drug interactions, and allergic reactions. (*EHealth Initiative and The Center for Information Technology Leadership*)
- Mistakes also occur due to patient error, when patients do not take their prescribed medications or take the wrong dosage, or with the wrong foods or at the wrong times.
- U.S. patients are prescribed improper medications in about 1 out of every 12 physician visits. An estimated 16.7 million physician visits for the elderly result in prescription errors per year. (*Centers for Disease Control*)
- Pharmacists make over 150 million calls to physicians for clarification of illegible prescriptions each year. (*Institute for Safe Medication Practices*) One Pharmacy Benefit Manager (PBM) estimates follow-up calls cost over \$4 each.

### **Electronic Prescribing (E-prescribing) Saves Lives:**

- Allows physicians to use hand-held wireless devices or a desktop computer to automatically and securely send a prescription to a patient's pharmacist.
- Immediately checks a patient's Electronic Medical Record and alerts the physician of potential conflicts with a patient's other medical conditions, known allergies, interactions with other active prescriptions and duplicate therapies the moment that a doctor writes a prescription.
- Automatically checks with medical databases to see if a patient's insurer covers a prescribed medication.
- Eliminates human errors caused by unreadable handwriting.

### **Electronic Prescribing Saves Money:**

- Presents information to providers and patients about lower cost generic alternatives and co-pay information.
- Automatically processes billing information when a prescription is entered which reduces administration costs.
- Electronic Prescribing could save up to \$29 billion annually in reduced hospitalizations. (*eHealth Initiative and The Center for Information Technology Leadership*)
- Reduces follow up calls between pharmacists and doctors by over 50 percent. (*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*)

### **The Federal Government's Role:**

- On January 27, 2005 Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Mike Leavitt proposed the first set of uniform standards for an electronic prescription drug program under the Medicare Modernization Act (MMA).
- HHS will ensure the availability of e-prescribing when the Medicare Part D program begins on January 1, 2006.
- Electronic Prescribing will improve the quality and safety of patient care through reduced medication errors, monitoring for adverse drug reactions, and could improve care and increase efficiency in physician offices.
- Electronic Prescribing will act as a key link between patients, doctors, and pharmacies, in Medicare to spur e-prescribing and the adoption of electronic health records throughout the Nation's health care system.
- However, investing in Electronic Prescribing is costly for hospitals and medical practices and these facilities are seeking assistance to set up these systems.

For further information or to join the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Health Care Caucus, contact Congressman Murphy's Health Care Legislative Assistant Michael Baxter at 225-2301 or [Michael.Baxter@mail.house.gov](mailto:Michael.Baxter@mail.house.gov).