



Require Mandatory Electronic Prescribing to Benefit Patients and Providers in Combatting Prescription Opioid Abuse

Pharmacy supports policies promoting the use of electronic prescribing to transmit prescription information between prescribers and pharmacists. Use of this technology will improve safety and security in the prescribing process.

In recent years, the adoption of electronic prescribing has increased dramatically. According to the most recent data available, 1.6 billion prescriptions were issued electronically in the United States last year, which equates to more than 4.3 million prescriptions per day.¹ While that number continues to grow, there is room to further improve the rate of electronic prescribing, particularly with controlled substance prescriptions, which lag behind overall adoption of this beneficial technology.

Chain pharmacy urges the adoption of laws and policies requiring electronic prescriptions where practical, as use of electronic prescribing technologies has numerous benefits for both patients and healthcare providers.

NACDS is pleased to support the *Every Prescription Conveyed Securely Act* (H.R. 3528/S. 2460), introduced in the House by Representatives Katherine Clark (D-MA) and Markwayne Mullin (R-OK) and in the Senate by Senators Michael Bennet (D-CO) and Dean Heller (R-NV). By requiring electronic prescribing for controlled substances in Medicare Part D, it makes significant progress in combating the abuse and diversion of prescription medications.

Electronic prescribing of controlled substances adds new dimensions of safety and security. Data from self-reported drug abusers suggest that between 3% and 9% of diverted opioid prescriptions are tied to forged prescriptions.^{2,3} Electronic controlled substance prescriptions serve to reduce the likelihood of diversion in this manner, as they cannot be altered, copied, and are electronically trackable. Furthermore, the federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) rules for electronic controlled substances prescriptions establish strict security measures, such as two-factor authentication, that reduce the likelihood of fraudulent prescribing. The state of New York saw a 70% reduction in the rate of lost or stolen prescription forms after implementing its own mandatory e-prescribing law.⁴

Studies show that electronic prescriptions are less prone to errors. According to a study conducted at a Johns Hopkins Medication outpatient pharmacy, 89% of handwritten prescriptions failed to meet best practice guidelines or were missing information that would otherwise be prompted by an electronic prescribing system. By comparison, not a single prescription in that study issued electronically contained these types of errors.⁵

Electronic prescribing reduces the number of prescriptions that go unfilled and improves medication adherence. Electronic prescriptions are sent directly to the patient’s pharmacy of choice. This technology allows healthcare providers to monitor and improve patient first fill adherence, as patients are more likely to fill prescriptions that are sent electronically to their pharmacy, as opposed to having to take the prescription to the pharmacy themselves.

¹ The Surescripts 2016 National Progress Report is available here: <http://surescripts.com/news-center/national-progress-report-2016/>

² Rosenblum, Andrew, et al. "Prescription opioid abuse among enrollees into methadone maintenance treatment." *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 90.1 (2007): 64-71

³ Inciardi, James A., et al. "The “black box” of prescription drug diversion." *Journal of Addictive Diseases* 28.4 (2009): 332-347

⁴ Remarks of Anita Murray, Deputy Director, New York State Department of Health at the Harold Rogers Prescription Drug Monitoring Program National Meeting (September 6, 2017)

⁵ http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/news/media/releases/researchers_find_handwritten_opioid_prescriptions_are_more_prone_to_mistakes_

Electronic prescribing practices improve patient care and outcomes. Electronic prescribing eliminates handwriting errors, and allows prescribers to track whether the prescription was filled and how often it is refilled. Electronic prescribing tools also enable clinical decision-making at point of care. When electronic prescribing is part of a healthcare provider's electronic health record system, prescriptions can be checked for interactions with patient medications, health conditions, and allergies. This serves to improve patient outcomes.

Electronic prescribing improves workflow in healthcare settings. Electronic prescribing reduces the administrative burden on physicians and clinical office staff responding to prescription refill authorization. Further, electronic prescribing streamlines the process of getting the prescription to the pharmacy, thereby reducing the time spent by pharmacists and prescribers on the phone. Finally, this technology allows for controlled substance prescriptions to be transmitted electronically along with other prescriptions.

Electronic prescribing practices gives prescribers more flexibility with getting needed prescriptions into the hands of patients. Electronic prescriptions eliminate the need for patients to have to travel to the prescriber's office to pick up a hard copy prescription, which is especially useful when patients are out of town.

Electronic prescribing drives down healthcare costs. Through the use of tools that allow for greater price transparency at the point of prescribing and enhanced formulary compliance, electronic prescribing practices can help to control healthcare costs.

Please enlist as a co-sponsor of the Every Prescription Conveyed Securely Act (H.R. 3528/S. 2460) and work to pass this legislation into law.