

Getting the most from e-prescribing

“Best practices” and answers to critical questions, drawn from pharmacies experienced with implementing electronic prescribing

1 Inform local physicians that you are able to accept prescriptions electronically and that you can start sending renewal authorization requests electronically.

Once your pharmacy software vendor activates your connection to the Surescripts network, your pharmacy becomes visible to prescribers who use Surescripts certified e-prescribing software. You may review a list of which physicians in your area e-prescribe by visiting www.surescripts.com and using the “Find E-Prescribing Physicians” tool at the top of the home page.

It can be beneficial to contact prescribers who send a high volume of prescriptions to your pharmacy and inform them of your new electronic prescribing capability.

A letter or call from your pharmacy will prompt those physicians who are not yet connected to get connected and will remind physicians who are connected to respond promptly to your pharmacy's electronic renewal authorization requests. Managing prescription renewals electronically can build efficiency in your pharmacy and represents a significant savings in time for practices used to managing renewals by fax or phone.

Surescripts provides some sample faxes and letters on its Web site that you can download and customize to inform physicians about your new connectivity. Just click “About E-Prescribing” and then the “Resources” tab in the left hand navigation bar to access this material.

2 Educate your entire staff about electronic prescribing and how it works within your pharmacy management software.

As with any new technology, it is important that each member of your staff understands what e-prescribing does, what its benefits are, and how it works. This knowledge will help staff understand how their daily workflow or responsibilities will be affected by e-prescribing and also answer common questions about this new process that they are likely to get from customers and practices.

Staff should be aware of how an e-prescription differs from a faxed prescription. If your pharmacy system places electronic prescription messages in a different queue from the one your staff commonly uses, make sure you put a process in place to regularly check that queue for new prescriptions and renewal responses.

A list of common e-prescribing questions and answers is available in the “Support” section of the Surescripts Web site.

3 Identify a staff member to become your expert on your pharmacy's electronic prescribing ability.

Although everyone should be taught to use the software, having a thoroughly knowledgeable person as a resource for other staff members will help reduce any confusion about your new functionality and help resolve problems quickly.

4 Take full advantage of managing renewal authorization requests electronically.

Managing prescription renewals electronically is an important way to strengthen your relationship with physicians in your area that e-prescribe. These prescribers have a very strong preference to receive prescription renewal requests electronically; as it greatly reduces the amount of time they

need to manage this process (versus using the fax or the phone). This is a key benefit of their e-prescribing connectivity, and it will help significantly reduce the number of faxes and phone calls your pharmacy will need to initiate for this process.

5 If you do not receive a prompt response from a physician for a prescription renewal authorization request you've sent electronically, please do not resend another request for the same prescription within 24 hours.

Just as with faxed or called-in renewal authorization requests, sometimes a physician may not be able to provide a prompt response to an electronic renewal request. Duplicate electronic requests for the same prescription may cause additional review and confusion in both the physician's office and your pharmacy.

Prescriber training and Surescripts messaging both encourage prescribers to respond to prescription renewal requests within 24 hours. Calling the physician's office to follow up on a delayed response in an emergency situation will be more effective than resending the request.

6 Communicate with practices that you believe are sending problematic e-prescriptions to your pharmacy.

E-prescribing supports a significantly more secure and accurate way of managing prescription information than on paper or by fax. However, prescribers may occasionally make an error when using their software to transmit an e-prescription.

If you believe that an e-prescription you have received contains an error, please contact the prescriber's practice to confirm or correct the prescription you have received and then dispense as appropriate to your customer.

It is important that practices are aware of issues as they develop, so they can self-correct problems if they are able.

7 Report issues with e-prescriptions that are causing you concern.

If there are ongoing issues with the e-prescribing functionality within your pharmacy software system, or if prescribers send e-prescriptions to your pharmacy that cause you concern, it is very important that you report the issues to your pharmacy software vendor so they can help resolve them and prevent future occurrences.

Your vendor will document and research the problem. For network or prescriber application related issues, your vendor will report the issue to Surescripts. Surescripts will research the issue and work with your vendor and/or a practice's technology vendor as appropriate for resolution. Resolution can include adjustments to your software, a prescriber's software, or training for you and/or the practice itself.

When reporting an error related to an e-prescription that a prescriber has sent you, it is important to provide as much of the following information as possible to your vendor:

- Transaction Date
- Name of Prescriber
- Message ID (noted within e-prescription)
- Prescriber SPI , DEA, and/or NPI (noted within e-prescription)
- Your Pharmacy's NCPDP ID

8 Communicate prescription fill-time expectations to local physicians and their staff, as well as to patients.

With the speed that electronic prescriptions reach the pharmacy, some patients and physicians mistakenly believe that the prescriptions will be ready for pickup immediately. It is helpful to inform your patients and physicians that adequate preparation time is still required, along with the time frames they should expect. You can also remind the physician to note on the electronic prescription

that a patient plans to come immediately to your pharmacy. They can do this by utilizing the free text or comment section of the electronic prescription.

9 Ensure that information in your pharmacy system about local prescribers is up to date.

Your pharmacy software vendor, which assisted you in connecting to the Surescripts network, should also work with you to keep your prescriber file up to date as new prescribers in your area become activated for e-prescribing. If you maintain files store by store, you should ensure that all data is updated in each store to be consistent.

As additional prescribers in your area become accessible through the network, you should ensure that there is a regularly scheduled process to update their information in your prescriber file. Your vendor should provide updates on which prescribers are eligible to receive prescription renewal requests electronically.

10 Turn over every leaf.

While electronic prescribing is not new, in some markets the volume of prescriptions received electronically may be low in comparison to your overall prescription volume. There may be varying levels of familiarity with this process by prescribers, patients, and your staff.

As a result, your staff may forget to look in the electronic prescription queue or check only the fax and phone queues when a patient arrives to pick up a prescription that has been sent electronically.

Ensure that all possible queues and locations are checked before telling the patient the prescription was not received.