

Statistics Illustrating the Challenge Posed by Paper-based Prescriptions

Paper Prescriptions Cost Physicians Time and Money

- A study by the Medical Group Management Association's Group Practice Research Network estimated that administrative complexity related to prescriptions costs a practice approximately \$15,700 a year for each full-time physician on staff – a figure that does not even take into consideration the time spent managing faxes.

Multiplying that figure by an estimated 563,000 office-based physicians currently practicing and prescribing medications in the United States reveals an opportunity for e-prescribing to significantly reduce the up to estimated \$8.8 billion worth of physician and staff time spent on the phone clarifying prescription information.

- According to research by Surescripts, refills management costs \$50,000 a year/per practice.
 - Practices spend on average 4.78 to 4.92 hours/day managing refills.
 - Prescribers spend on avg. 1.84 – 1.88 hrs/day.
 - Staff spends on avg. 2.94 to 3.04 hrs/day.

Medication Errors

- According to a July 2006 report issued by the Institute of Medicine, more than 1.5 million Americans are injured annually by medication errors.
- According to the Institute for Safe Medication Practices, many medication errors result from:
 - Miscommunication due to illegible handwriting
 - Unclear abbreviations and dose designations
 - Unclear telephone or verbal orders
 - Ambiguous orders and fax-related problems
- According to the September 10, 2007 issue of the Archives of Internal Medicine
 - Serious adverse drug events and related deaths more than doubled between 1998 and 2005
 - From 1998 to 2005, the number of reported serious adverse drug events increased 2.6-fold from 34,966 in 1998 to 89,842 in 2005.
 - The number of fatal adverse drug events increased 2.7-fold during the same time period, from 5,519 in 1998 to 15,107 in 2005.



- The number of adverse events increased four times faster than the total number of outpatient prescriptions, which rose from 2.7 billion to 3.8 billion during that time frame.
- "...We saw increases in drugs whose risks we've really known about and should be able to manage. We've had insulin for 50 to 60 years, yet adverse events are increasing rapidly..."

Growth in Similar Sounding Drug Names

- According to the April 14, 2008 issue of the American Medical News, there are 3,170 pairs of drug names that look or sound alike and can result in medication errors. They were found in a recent U.S. Pharmacopeia review of more than 26,000 patient records submitted over three years by 870 health care organizations. That total is nearly double the 1,750 similarly named drug pairs identified in a 2004 report issued by USP, a Rockville, Md.-based nonprofit standards-setting organization.
- The more than 30,000 drug-name mix-ups included in the January 2008 USP report harmed patients 1.4% of the time, with seven patient deaths attributed to mistakes. USP leaders and other experts said including the indicated use for a medication could prevent such problems.
- One physician's faxed order to discontinue hydrocodone, marketed as Anexsia, was misread by the pharmacist as an order to discontinue Arixtra, an anticoagulant.