

It Only Works When Everyone Knows

By Ken Whittemore, RPh

There's an old joke about a man who loses faith because his prayers to win the lottery go unanswered. "Meet me half way," God exclaims in frustration. "Buy a ticket!"

In many ways, the history of electronic prescribing or e-prescribing demonstrates the same disconnect. Both pharmacists and physicians want to handle prescriptions electronically, but each wants the other to make it happen without having to meet the other party halfway. Consequently, time passes and neither party acts. For those that do "buy the ticket," there are several approaches that can help convert more prescriptions into electronic transactions, thereby driving e-prescribing throughout the health care system.

Toot Your Own Horn

If you have set up your pharmacy for e-prescribing, don't be silent about it. Let physicians in your area know about your new capability. Send them communications announcing your new capability. Create a press release about e-prescribing in your pharmacy and contact your community newspaper. Ask an editor if the paper would be interested in covering your introduction of e-prescribing to your area. Add a tagline announcing your e-prescribing capabilities to ads and brochures you already plan to publish. Print your ability to handle e-prescribing on your business cards or other communication that would reach physicians, and every contact you have with a physician practice lets you spread the e-prescribing message.

If you're hesitant or just don't have the time to write the communications yourself, there's a no-cost, low-effort option for pharmacists with pharmacy computer systems connected to the SureScripts Electronic Prescribing Network. You can visit www.surescripts.com/announceit to download customizable marketing materials, such as

"coming soon" letters, announcements and web copy. Once on your own computer, you can make adjustments to the language on the materials to reflect your pharmacy, insert your logo, and then send them to specific doctors or post on your pharmacy's Web site.

Educate the Docs

But what happens if the doctors around you are not jumping on the e-prescribing bandwagon as quickly as you'd like? This is where you can take that extra step and provide the "doubting docs" with the critical information they need to make a decision. By calling the SureScripts Electronic Resource Center at 866-RxReady (866-797-3239), you can obtain doctor detailing communications, such as a general brochure about the advantages of e-prescribing for physicians; a sheet identifying clinical solutions certified to connect to the SureScripts network; a questionnaire to help practices make their technology selection; a best practices guide; and other resources that help educate physicians on the benefits of electronic prescribing and how they can get started.

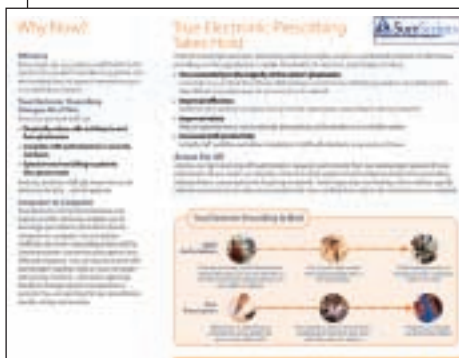
Electronic prescribing is already mainstream, but it will become the norm once both parties—pharmacists and physicians—accept the fact they each have to meet the other halfway.

SureScripts Relief Efforts Highlighted by Online Access Site

In the aftermath of the Gulf Coast hurricanes, www.Katrinahealth.org was created as an online service for authorized health professionals to gain electronic access to prescription medication records for evacuees. SureScripts was part of a broad group of private companies, public agencies, national organizations, and others that helped compile and make accessible information on the site.

Authorized health professionals and pharmacies had access to evacuees' med-

ication and dosage information to help them renew prescriptions, prescribe new medications, and coordinate care. This information was accessible from anywhere in the country.



"SureScripts and our pharmacy partners were proud to be part of the effort to provide potentially life-saving information in response to Hurricane Katrina," said Kevin Hutchinson, president and CEO of SureScripts. "The commitment to react quickly to this urgent need, even as pharmacies throughout the affected areas handled their own responses to the disaster, was overwhelming." □

Ken Whittemore, RPh, MBA, is vice president of professional and regulatory affairs at SureScripts. For questions about electronic prescribing and how you can ensure that your pharmacy is taking advantage of this technology, please contact the SureScripts Electronic Prescribing Resource Center at 1-866-RxReady or by e-mail at info@surescripts.com, or visit www.surescripts.com.