



**BCBSA Statement: AHIC Medicare E-Prescribing Recommendation 'Clear Signal' Congress Must Act Now to Protect Seniors**

**Statement from Scott P. Serota, president and CEO Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association**

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**WASHINGTON** – Scott P. Serota, president and chief executive officer of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association (BCBSA), released the following statement in response to today's decision by the American Health Information Community (AHIC) to recommend that the HHS Secretary seek authority from Congress to mandate electronic prescribing (e-prescribing) in Medicare:

"Today's consensus decision by AHIC to recommend that the HHS Secretary seek authority to mandate e-prescribing in Medicare is a clear signal that Congress must act now to protect senior and disabled beneficiaries from preventable medication errors that cost billions and harm millions every year.

"As an AHIC Board member, I wish to applaud my colleagues for their leadership and for moving decisively to recommend the Secretary address this issue. Representing consumers, physicians, pharmacies, health plans, employers, and policymakers, today's action by the AHIC demonstrates that there is broad-based consensus to implement e-prescribing as quickly as possible and to provide the Secretary with sufficient flexibility to make this vision a reality.

"Last year, the Institute of Medicine (IoM) called on Congress to enact legislation that provides for system-wide adoption of e-prescribing technology by 2010. The IoM estimated that 1.5 million preventable medication errors occur annually, causing 7,000 deaths and \$77 billion in added health care costs each year.

"BCBSA believes strongly that physicians participating in the Medicare program should be required to submit prescriptions electronically by 2010. Recognizing that this timeframe could pose a burden on small practices and solo practitioners, Congress should allow an exception for certain small providers."

*The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association is made up of 39 independent, locally operated Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies that collectively provide healthcare coverage for nearly 98 million Americans. For more information on the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association and its member companies, please visit [www.BCBS.com](http://www.BCBS.com).*

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