

E-Script Advocates Respond to AMA

HDM Breaking News, May 23, 2008

Industry stakeholders on May 22 sent a letter to congressional leaders in response to an earlier letter from the American Medical Association to Congress that called for the federal government to complete all national technical standards to support electronic prescribing by the end of 2009.

The AMA letter noted that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in April issued a final rule adopting three standards to support formulary and benefits, medication history, and fill status notification components of e-prescribing. But the AMA called for quick action on three additional standards covering medication instructions, standard terminology and real-time prior authorization. "So, it really is essential that these three incomplete standards be finalized and fully functional in order to realize the truly robust e-prescribing benefits sought by so many," the AMA letter stated.

But the May 22 letter to Congress from pharmacy, hospital, physician, insurer and vendor organizations contends that the lack of additional standards presently is not a barrier to physician e-prescribing adoption. The letter cites that an estimated 100 million electronic prescriptions will be successfully processed during 2008, nearly three times the volume last year.



The image is a promotional graphic for a Citrix web seminar. On the left, there is a photograph of two people in white lab coats; one is pointing at a tablet held by the other. To the right of the photo, the Citrix logo is displayed in a large, bold, black font. Below the logo, the text reads: "Web Seminar: Critical Success Factors for EMR Implementations". The date and time are listed as "June 18th, 11:00am Pacific / 2:00 pm Eastern". At the bottom, there is a blue button with the text "REGISTER TODAY" and a right-pointing arrow.

The technical requirements for e-prescribing exist today, according to the letter. "Despite its newfound popularity as a talking point, the assertion that the U.S. healthcare system somehow lacks uniform or complete e-prescribing standards, or that those standards have yet to be adopted broadly by physician technology vendors, is simply not accurate."

Additional standards do remain in development, letter authors noted. "When ready, these additional standards will allow more advanced functions and features to be added to existing e-prescribing systems," according to the letter. "However, they are by no means preventing any physician, pharmacist or patient from realizing the substantial and measurable benefits associated with e-prescribing today."

Further, "Lack of uniform technical standards is one example of an e-prescribing barrier that is based entirely on perception," according to the letter. "In this case, misperception."

Signers of the letter include numerous pharmacy chains; the National Association of Chain Drug Stores; National Community Pharmacists Association; National Council for Prescription Drug Programs; CIO John Glaser of Partners HealthCare System; CIO John Halamka, M.D., of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center; Mark Frisse, director of regional informatics programs at Vanderbilt Center for Better Health; Lifespan, the ERISA Industry Committee; Rhode Island Quality Institute; Southwest Medical Associates; SureScripts and WellPoint Inc.

For copies of both letters, send an e-mail to joseph.goedert@sourcemedia.com.

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