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Experts say e-prescribing will be first and hottest HIT issue in 2008

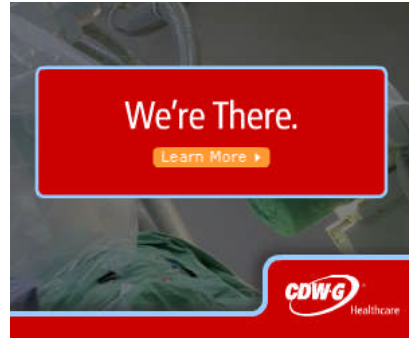
Healthcare IT News
 By *Diana Manos, Senior Editor* | 01/14/08

WASHINGTON - Experts for and against electronic e-prescribing all feel it will bubble up as one of the hottest and most debated health information technology issues in 2008.

According to *Deborah Peel*, MD, founder of Patient Privacy Rights, when it comes to healthcare IT, Congress is likely to address e-prescribing first because it may seem a simple and somewhat easy place to start.

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Peel has major concerns, however, with the routine sale of e-prescribing data, a current practice that does not require a patient's consent. "No privacy group will support e-prescribing unless patients have control," Peel said. "It would be insane."

In December, *Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.)* introduced a bill that would require physicians who treat Medicare patients to use electronic prescribing, starting Jan. 1, 2011. So far this bill has drawn wide-spread bi-partisan support but remains buried in committees for consideration.

Meanwhile, the market and many proponents are biting at the bit for some action.

"Americans are ready for e-prescribing," said former speaker of the House, *Newt Gingrich*, the founder of the Center for Health Transformation. "With Americans using ATM cards everyday in this country and abroad, we believe they are prepared for the massive benefits provided by an electronic prescriptions system."

Many groups say the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) rules prohibiting the electronic prescribing of controlled substances is the blocker to progress. Because of these rules, physicians are forced to use both paper and electronic methods to prescribe, keeping many from using electronic methods at all.

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