

ELECTRONIC PRESCRIBING AND ONLINE REFILLS ENSURES PATIENT SAFETY

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The pharmacy industry is undergoing rapid change due to the increasing size of our elderly population, and the increasing volume of medications and alternative medicines. The healthcare industry has introduced several new technologies to support these industry changes while at the same time improving efficiency, reducing errors and increasing patient safety.

Challenges

Improvements in medicine are allowing individuals to live longer. The aging “baby boomer” generation is using more medicine increasing prescription demand and causing a shortage of pharmacists. This pharmacist shortage is driving the use of technology to satisfy the demand while continuing to provide quality patient care and ensure patient safety.

Solution

One new technology, Electronic Prescribing, allows doctors to electronically submit prescriptions to pharmacists eliminating paper, reducing errors and improving efficiency. This technology will also reduce patient wait time by allowing the prescription to be filled by the time the patient arrives at the pharmacy.

Electronic prescribing also offers enhanced safety features for patients. Electronic prescriptions eliminate errors caused by illegible prescriptions. It also eliminates follow-up phone calls to verify prescription information as well as misunderstood phone messages for a prescription or refill of a medication consisting of similar sounding names. Patients will gain a level of confidence seeing prescriptions transmitted from the physician to the pharmacist with a hand held personal digital assistant (PDA).

Online prescription refills is another technology that can reduce errors and improve prescription processing efficiency. With online refills, patients can submit their refill requests electronically. While patients enter their own refill requests, the QS/1 system verifies this information in real time for accuracy against the pharmacy’s database, thus, eliminating the possibility of entering incorrect prescription information and further ensuring patient safety. Patients can schedule prescription pickup times online based on pharmacy parameters and can also receive refill reminders via e-mail.

Pharmacies with a Web presence can offer valuable healthcare content to support patient counseling. With healthcare content accessible day or night, patients no longer have to wait in the pharmacy for an available pharmacist to assist with health-related questions. Pharmacy web sites can also provide health and wellness and drug interaction tools which

offer essential information to further ensure patient safety. In addition, a Web presence can provide specific information such as store hours and driving directions 24 hours a day, seven days a week for added convenience.

CornerDrugstore provides a Directory Service for patients to quickly locate a pharmacy in their area. A map link is also available for patients to obtain specific driving directions to a pharmacy from any location.

Benefits of Pharmacy Technology

Communicating healthcare information using the latest technology tools available in the pharmacy industry provides several benefits to pharmacists, physicians and patients:

- **Ensures patient safety:** A patient has been diagnosed with a rare illness and is uneducated about any side effects that might be associated with taking the prescribed medication. The patient received counseling by the pharmacist when the prescription was picked up, but a few hours later the patient thinks of some more questions concerning their illness and the medication they will be taking. Instead of driving back to the pharmacy or calling the pharmacy and having to wait to speak to an available pharmacist, the patient can lookup the information on the pharmacy's web site. The patient can read about their illness in the health illustrated encyclopedia and use the drug interaction checker to make sure this particular prescription will not interact with other medications to ensure safety. The patient can also receive further counseling using the health and wellness tools on the pharmacy's web site.
- **Reduces patient wait time:** A patient has a chronic disease and is in need of a prescription refill quickly. Having to wait hours or even days for a phone or fax response from a physician for a refill authorization could be detrimental to the patient's health. Instead, the pharmacist sends the refill authorization request electronically to the physician with the touch of a key using electronic prescribing. In return, the physician authorizes the refill and electronically communicates the prescription refill authorization back to the pharmacy in real-time through QS/1's pharmacy management software. The prescription then appears in the pharmacy's workflow queue, and immediately notifies the pharmacy staff that the refill has been authorized by the physician. The refill is then processed for the patient in a timely manner, possibly saving the patient's life.
- **Reduces prescription errors:** A patient taking multiple prescriptions goes to the pharmacy web site to submit a refill request. The patient selects the correct prescription to be refilled from a list of three ongoing prescriptions, thus, avoiding any confusion over which prescription the patient wants to be filled. The refill request is then sent electronically to the pharmacy for accurate prescription processing.
- **Improves prescription processing efficiency and accuracy:** The phone is not ringing off the hook in the pharmacy; faxes are not continually coming into the phar-

macy; the pharmacy staff is no longer distracted by patients calling in or waiting for their prescription to be filled. Why? Physicians are electronically communicating new prescriptions to the pharmacy. These prescriptions are sent directly to the pharmacy management software which notifies the pharmacy staff that a new prescription has arrived and is ready to be filled. The pharmacy staff does not have to take the time to read, decipher and enter a handwritten prescription. Instead, they have more time to focus on patient counseling and filling prescriptions that have been sent electronically for a more efficient and accurate prescription filling workflow.

- **Eliminates illegible prescriptions and the necessary follow-up:** A patient walks into the pharmacy with a written prescription. A pharmacy staff member has a difficult time reading the physician's handwriting. The pharmacist must take the time to call the physician for verification. Meanwhile, another physician who is a member of the network for electronic prescribing, is sending in prescriptions electronically to the pharmacy. These prescriptions are being filled quickly, accurately and without any hassle, due to the legibility that accompanies electronic communication.

QS/1, a leading provider for pharmacy software, serves more than 9,000 customers in independent pharmacies, drug/food chain pharmacies, institutional pharmacies, hospital outpatient pharmacies and HME businesses. QS/1's pharmacy management software includes the ability to receive electronic prescriptions. This real-time, electronic communication between the pharmacist and physician will increase productivity and accuracy in the pharmacy.

CornerDrugstore, the leader in pharmacy web site content and services, offers Online



Refills and Health Content as well as CornerDrugstore.com, a solution for pharmacists without a web site to establish a web presence. Online Refills are integrated with QS/1's pharmacy management software for quick and efficient prescription processing as well as credible healthcare content for additional patient counseling that is accessible to patients day or night. Combine QS/1's pharmacy management software with CornerDrugstore's Online Refills and Health Content for the total pharmacy solution.

Through CornerDrugstore.com pharmacies can set up a web site to offer store specific and other healthcare information to patients. This cost effective solution is hosted by CornerDrugstore, which also provides full network redundancy and virus-protected servers to keep its customers' web sites constantly available.

QS/1 also offers an Application Service Provider (ASP) solution for pharmacies looking for a way to enter the pharmacy market with minimal upfront costs. QS/1 hosts this solution to eliminate software installation and maintenance by pharmacy personnel. This solution is hosted in multiple data centers to provide redundant networks, power, equipment

and data back-up. By allowing QS/1 to store data in redundant data centers, pharmacists can eliminate their worry over losing valuable customer data due to power outages and network or equipment failures.

Enterprise, a solution also offered by QS/1, allows for the data in each store location to reside in virtual servers all within a single physical server at the central office. A centralized server provides IT personnel with the ability to centrally manage all data, file maintenance, security and backups. This centralized server can allow each store to share or keep separate customer data, drug data, pricing and prescription profiles between all locations providing the flexibility to meet the specific needs of each pharmacy location.

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