

## **Health IT Tools**

### **Q: What is e-prescribing?**

A: E-prescribing is the use of electronic tools to prescribe drugs. E-prescribing tools can include both software and hardware programs like personal computers, handheld and wireless devices, and touch screens. E-prescribing is one of the integral first steps to achieving the improvements in care that will result from the broad deployment of the EHR. Other issues related to this topic area include, but are not limited to, pharmacy automation, medication compliance, pharmacy databases, computerized provider order entry (CPOE), and adverse drug events (ADE).

Today, prescribers make their drug-prescribing decisions based on sometimes limited available patient information. Typically, they give a handwritten paper prescription to the patient, fax it to the dispenser or pharmacy; or have their staff call-in the prescription on behalf of the patient. With e-prescribing, the provider can electronically send prescriptions directly to a pharmacy from the point-of-care. The pharmacist may use electronic claims, eligibility, and benefits submission, which provides alerts about contraindications, the need for prior authorization, recently filled prescriptions of the same drug/medication and/or lower cost alternatives. E-prescribing also allows the dispenser to electronically contact the prescriber for approval of changes, refills, or renewals. The benefits of e-prescribing include:

- Legible prescriptions
- Alerts to help patients remember to take their medications properly
- Better management of medication costs
- Streamlining the refill processes
- Providing greater convenience for patients
- Reducing medication errors/injuries

### **Q: What is clinical decision support (CDS)?**

A: Clinical decision support (CDS) is defined broadly as a clinical system, application or process that helps health professionals make medical decisions to enhance and help manage patient care. The clinical knowledge of interest could range from simple facts and condition relationships to best practices for managing patients with specific disease states, new medical knowledge from clinical research and other helpful functions such as reminders and alerts.

### **Q: What are registries?**

A: A patient registry is a comprehensive list of patients that share a common characteristic, such as the same illness and offers the ability to analyze a specific patient population. Registries are used to search items in the EHR that allow doctors and other providers to:

- Determine patients with a specific medical condition.
- List patients taking a specific drug by class or name
- Generate alerts to a specific list of patients
- Generate letters (next visit, immunizations required)
- Query patients based on encounter / visit dates
- Report patient demographics by age, gender, location, etc...

**Q: What are personal health records (PHRs) and patient portals?**

A: A personal health record (PHR) is an electronic, universally available, lifelong resource of health information maintained and owned by an individual. The PHR is different from an EHR system maintained by a health care provider organization in that the PHR is maintained by the patient. These individuals own and manage the information in the PHR, which comes from both multiple health care providers and the individuals themselves.

PHRs can contain a diverse range of data but usually include information about:

- Allergies and adverse drug reactions
- Medications (including dose and how often taken) including over the counter medications and dietary supplements
- Illnesses and hospitalizations
- Surgeries and other procedures
- Vaccinations
- Laboratory test results
- Dietary and physical fitness activity
- Family history

A patient portal is a health care-related online application that allows patients to interact and communicate with their providers. Typically, portal services are available on the Internet. Patient portals can be separate web sites linked to a provider's web site or can be integrated into the existing web site of the provider.

**Q: What is the difference between PHRs and patient portals?**

A: PHRs reside with the patient/individual who can add information a provider would not usually have access to. Patient portals are primarily communication tools between the doctors and patients and may have service enhancements like e-prescriptions and online appointment scheduling.

**Q: How would these tools benefit patients? How would they benefit quality of care?**

A: PHRs make clinical encounters more productive, streamline patient-provider communications, and help develop more efficient patient management processes. PHR benefits can be measured by fewer phone calls, lower 'no-show' rates with online

appointment booking, lower patient turnover and higher patient satisfaction, improved health behavior outcomes such as smoking cessation and weight loss, better adherence to condition management programs, greater ability to qualify for PHR incentive programs such as Health Risk Assessments, and higher practice revenue with online co-pay and bill pay.

**Q: What tools are available for patients that might help them comply with their drugs and treatments?**

A: In general, PHRs promote patient interest and participation in their own health and health care decisions, which can increase medication and treatment adherence. PHR tools include:

- Data entered directly from health monitoring devices (i.e., glucometer, blood pressure gauge, etc.)
- Alerts and reminders for medication refills and treatments (by email, cell phone, or text messages)
- Up-to-date medication list is available to the patient
- Real time access to health status indicators (e.g., weight loss, nutrition, exercise, immunizations, screenings)
- Drug and health encyclopedias
- Access to test results
- Email communications with providers