CANADIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION and CANADIAN PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION

e-Prescribing Joint Statement

Vision for e-Prescribing

By 2015, e-prescribing will be the means by which prescriptions are generated for Canadians.

Definition

e-Prescribing is the secure electronic creation and transmission of a prescription between an authorized prescriber and a patient's pharmacy of choice, using clinical Electronic Medical Record (EMR) and pharmacy management software.

Background

Health Information Technology (HIT) is an enabler to support clinicians in the delivery of health care services to patients. The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) and the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) each have identified e-prescribing as a key tool to deliver better value to patients. The integration of HIT into clinics and health care facilities where physicians and pharmacists provide care is a priority for both associations[1].

As part of its Health Care Transformation initiative, the CMA highlighted the need to accelerate the introduction of e-prescribing in Canada to make it the main method of prescribing. In its policy on optimal prescribing the CMA noted that one of the key elements was the introduction of electronic prescribing. The CPhA, as part of its Blueprint for Pharmacy Implementation Plan, highlights information and communication technology, which includes e-prescribing, as one of five priority areas.

We applaud the ongoing efforts of Canada Health Infoway, provinces and territories to establish Drug Information Systems (DIS) and the supporting infrastructure to enable e-prescribing. We urge governments to maintain e-prescribing as a priority and take additional measures to accelerate their investments in this area.

It is our joint position that e-prescribing will improve patient care and safety. e-Prescribing, when integrated with DIS, supports enhanced clinical decision-making, prescribing and medication management, and integrates additional information available at the point of care into the clinical workflow.

Principles

The following principles should guide our collective efforts to build e-prescribing capability in all jurisdictions:

- Patient confidentiality and security must be maintained

- Patient choice must be protected

- Clinicians must have access to best practice information and drug cost and formulary data

- Work processes must be streamlined

- e-Prescribing systems must be able to integrate with clinical and practice management software and DIS

- Guidelines must be in place for data sharing among health professionals and for any other use or disclosure of data

- The authenticity and accuracy of the prescription must be verifiable

- The process must prevent prescription forgeries and diversion

- Pan-Canadian standards must be set for electronic signatures

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[1]*Health Care Transformation in Canada, Canadian Medical Association, June 2010; Blueprint for Pharmacy Implementation Plan, Canadian Pharmacists Association, September 2009*

Benefits of e-Prescribing

A number of these benefits will be realized when e-prescribing is integrated with jurisdictional Drug Information Systems (DIS).

Patients:
- Improves patient safety and overall quality of care
- Increases convenience for dispensing of new and refill prescriptions
- Supports collaborative, team-based care

Providers:
- Supports a safer and more efficient method of prescribing and authorizing refills by replacing outdated phone, fax and paper-based prescriptions
- Eliminates re-transcription and decreases risk of errors and liability, as a prescription is written only once at the point-of-care
- Supports electronic communications between providers and reduces phone calls and call-backs to/from pharmacies for clarification
- Provides Warning and Alert systems at the point of prescribing, supporting clinician response to potential contraindications, drug interactions and allergies
- Facilitates informed decision-making by making medication history, drug, therapeutic, formulary and cost information available at the point of prescribing

Health Care System:
- Improves efficiency and safety of prescribing, dispensing and monitoring of medication therapy
- Supports access to a common, comprehensive medication profile, enhancing clinical decision making and patient adherence
- Increases cost-effective medication use, through improved evidence-based prescribing, formulary adherence, awareness of drug costs and medication management
- Improves reporting and drug use evaluation

Challenges

While evidence of the value of e-prescribing is established in the literature, its existence has not fostered broad implementation and adoption. In Canada, there are a number of common and inter-related challenges to e-prescribing's implementation and adoption. These include:

- Improving access to relevant and complete information to support decision-making
- Increasing the level of the adoption of technology at the point of care
- Focusing on systems-based planning to ensure continuum-wide value
- Integrating e-prescribing into work processes to gain support from physicians, pharmacists and other prescribers
- Increasing leadership commitment to communicate the need for change, remove barriers and ensure progress
- Updating legislation and regulation to support e-prescribing

Enabling e-Prescribing in Canada

CMA and CPhA believe that we can achieve the vision that is set out in this document and address the aforementioned challenges by working collectively on five fronts:

- Health care leadership in all jurisdictions and clinical organizations must commit to make e-prescribing a reality by 2015
- Provinces and territories, with Canada Health Infoway, must complete the building blocks to support e-prescribing by increasing Electronic Medical Record (EMR) adoption at the point of care, finishing the work on the Drug Information Systems (DIS) in all jurisdictions and building the connectivity among the points of care and the DIS systems
- Pharmacist and physician organizations in conjunction with provinces, territories and Canada Health Infoway must identify clear benefits for clinicians (enhancing the effectiveness of care delivery and in efficiencies in changing workflows) to adopt e prescribing and focus their efforts on achieving these benefits in the next three years
- Provinces, territories and regulatory organizations must create a policy/regulatory environment that supports e-prescribing which facilitates the role of clinicians in providing health care to their patients
- Provinces and territories must harmonize the business rules and e-health standards to simplify implementation and conformance by software vendors and allow more investment in innovation.