

Electronic Transfer of Prescriptions (ETP)



Introduction

Electronic Transfer of Prescriptions (ETP) is an important foundation stone for community pharmacy in the movement towards a connected healthcare system.

ETP is concerned with the safe and secure transfer of prescription information between a Prescriber (doctor, specialist, dentist, optometrist, nurse practitioner etc.) and a Community Pharmacy using an electronic system known as a Prescription Exchange Service (PES). There are currently two PES systems operating in Australia – eRx Script Exchange and MediSecure. Each PES has been approved by the Commonwealth and is required to meet specified standards relating to security and privacy. A pharmacy or medical practice may be connected one or both PES systems.

To realise the benefits of eHealth, community pharmacy should get actively involved in furthering your skills around electronic medication management, the first step of which is turning on ETP in your pharmacy.

How it works

When a prescriber prints a prescription, an electronic copy of the prescription is secured via encryption and automatically uploaded to the pharmacy's preferred prescription exchange service. The electronic copy of the prescription is held securely in the PES until such time as it is downloaded by the dispensing pharmacy. An electronic prescription is easily identified by the single barcode on the prescription.

When the patient takes the paper prescription to an ETP enabled pharmacy of their choice, the pharmacist will scan the barcode, allowing the dispense system to automatically 'pull down' and decrypt the prescription information from the PES. This information is then used to automatically populate the pharmacy dispensing system including patient, concession, Medicare and the statutory prescription information.

If the pharmacy does not use ETP, the prescription is dispensed as per the standard dispensing process. That is, the prescription information is manually transcribed into the pharmacy's dispensing system and the medicine dispensed.

Benefits

Ensuring that medicines information can be accurately and securely shared underpins a range of medications management and healthcare benefits for both patients and healthcare professionals.

From a patients perspective there is benefit from improved health outcomes as the risk of transcription errors is greatly reduced. This assists in reducing the likelihood of preventable adverse drug events.

From a pharmacy perspective, there is a reduction in the time spent re-keying prescription information which can be directed to patient counselling to improve health outcomes centred on medication compliance. Other benefits that will flow are better messaging between pharmacists and doctors streamlining the management of owing prescriptions, changes in item or instructions and last repeat notifications.

It is also important to note that ETP is very low impact for all users and does not negatively change workflow for prescribers or pharmacists.

PES Interoperability

An important part of making ETP work is to ensure that all electronic prescriptions barcodes can be read regardless of the dispense system or ETP provider you use. This means that all electronic prescription barcodes from ETP enabled pharmacies (irrespective of which PES system holds the electronic prescription or associated electronic repeat authorisation) will allow you to scan the prescription details and thus be interoperable.

During 2012 the two PES system operators began an interoperability project with the assistance of the Australian Government. Once completed and rolled out to your pharmacy in early 2013 this means that you will be able to scan any barcode and download the prescription information safely and securely to your pharmacy dispensing system.

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ETP is just the first step

Electronic Transfer of Prescriptions is the foundation for other medication management initiatives such as a Medication Repository. This repository is designed to contain a combined list of prescribed and dispensed medications regardless of how many different doctors and pharmacies the patient regularly visits. It may contain prescription data from the community, hospital and aged care settings.

A Medication Repository, known as the National Prescription and Dispense Repository (NPDR), will be rolled out during 2013. Pharmacies that are ETP enabled will be able to participate in this key initiative.

Community pharmacy is ideally placed to take full advantage of the medication management benefits of electronic transfer of prescriptions and we encourage you to ensure that your pharmacy is connected to this future by enrolling in ETP today.

