

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Electronic prescribing

The Canadian health care system is witnessing a significant shift toward digitization with one of the most critical advancements being the implementation of electronic prescribing (e-prescribing).

PrescribeIT, Canada's national e-prescribing service, is at the forefront of this transformation, modernizing how prescriptions are managed, transmitted and filled across the country. The PrescribeIT initiative is led by Canada Health Infoway, a federally funded, not-for-profit organization focused on accelerating the development and adoption of digital health solutions.

The need for e-prescribing

Traditionally, prescriptions have been handwritten, printed and physically handed to patients or faxed to pharmacies. These paper-based processes have inherent inefficiencies and risks, including prescription errors due to legibility issues, transcription mistakes and the potential for prescription tampering. For patients, misplacing their prescriptions can delay treatment, while health care professionals and pharmacists often spend time clarifying orders. Moving to a fully integrated e-prescribing solution promises to streamline processes, reduce errors, improve patient outcomes and curb medication misuse.

What is PrescribeIT?

PrescribeIT is a secure, inter-operable electronic prescribing service that allows prescribers and pharmacists to create, send and receive prescriptions directly within their electronic medical record (EMR) and pharmacy management systems (PMS). The platform ensures that prescription data is securely transmitted between health care providers and pharmacists, eliminating the need for paper prescriptions and reducing the risks associated with manual processes. Whether in a primary care setting, specialist practice or community pharmacy, health care professionals can send prescriptions directly to a patient's pharmacy through their existing EMR without leaving their primary system.

Benefits of PrescribeIT

- **Improved patient safety:** Prescriptions are transmitted directly into the pharmacy's system, reducing the risk of transcription errors and improving medication safety.
- **Streamlined workflow:** PrescribeIT integrates seamlessly into health care workflows, saving time by eliminating the need for manual processes like faxing.
- **Enhanced security:** Prescriptions are transmitted securely, protecting patient privacy and reducing the risk of fraud or tampering.

Availability and cost

PrescribeIT is a national service available to community- and hospital-based prescribers and pharmacies. The system is free to use, encouraging widespread adoption across Canada.

The rapid growth and adoption of PrescribeIT reflect a crucial step forward in modernizing Canada's health care system. With over 16,000 prescribers, nearly 8,000 pharmacies, and more than 4,000 clinics already benefiting from this secure, efficient platform, it's clear that electronic prescribing is the future of patient care.

Editor's note: The views, perspectives and opinions in this article are solely the author's and do not necessarily represent those of the AMA.