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**MORE THAN THREE MILLION ELECTRONIC PRESCRIPTIONS  
TRANSMITTED THROUGH THE eRx COLLABORATIVE  
Safety alerts result in more than 4000 cancelled prescriptions each month**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**—BOSTON — Feb. 1, 2006 — After two successful years of ePrescribing expansion in Massachusetts, the eRx Collaborative announced that more than three million electronic prescriptions have been transmitted through Collaborative members.

There were more than 2.6 million electronic prescriptions transmitted in 2005 alone.

Electronic prescriptions grew steadily throughout the year. At the end of 2005, more than 300,000 electronic prescriptions were been transmitted per month, with a record high of more than 80,000 scripts in one week. This represents a 136 percent increase throughout the year and a fourfold year-over-year increase from the previous year.

ePrescribing can greatly increase the safety and efficiency of the prescribing process. A 1999 Institute of Medicine report cited medical errors — including those related to improperly prescribed medications — as the eighth leading cause of death for Americans, more than motor vehicle accidents, breast cancer or AIDS.

ePrescribing also can impact physician behavior. By the end of 2005, more than 4,000 potentially harmful prescriptions were cancelled each month as a result of alerts issued due to potentially harmful drug-drug and drug-allergy interactions.

Some of these potential interactions may have been detected by the pharmacist prior to dispensing the drug to the patient, but ePrescribing allows this to be done earlier in the process, which can have positive implications. The drug interactions could cause reactions ranging from skin rashes to a life-threatening illness.

ePrescribing can also make health care more affordable. “Based on Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA) actuarial analysis, there is a strong indication that physicians who write a significant number of prescriptions electronically shift their prescribing behavior,” said Vincent Plourde, vice president of provider services at BCBSMA.

“These users prescribed according to the drug formulary more than non-ePrescribers, translating into a 1.5 percent drug cost savings on their new prescriptions and subsequent refills. It is also estimated that members seeing an ePrescriber who changes their prescription to a lower tier drug prompted by a formulary message can save an average of \$20 to \$25 per prescription.”

Dr. Allen Hinkle, chief medical officer at Tufts Health Plan, said, “Electronic prescribing has broad implications to improve the quality and efficiency of care. In addition to encouraging the use of lower tier drugs, ePrescribing has proven to reduce the volume of fax and paperwork between physician offices and pharmacies.”

The Collaborative has introduced ePrescribing to approximately 15 percent of the providers in Massachusetts. The success of ePrescribing lies in driving the market to broad adoption. Therefore in 2006, the Collaborative will work to:

- Broaden eRx relationships and work together to increase eRx Collaborative adoption in the state
- Expand eRx Collaborative partnerships with other Massachusetts health plans
- Evaluate ePrescribing impact on quality, safety and affordability
- Continue to serve as a model for ePrescribing implementation across the nation

BCBSMA, Tufts Health Plan and Neighborhood Health Plan are members of the eRx Collaborative. The plans formed the Collaborative in 2003 to jumpstart the use of comprehensive ePrescribing technology in Massachusetts. The program offers physicians the goals of improved patient safety and reduced medical costs. The eRx Collaborative uses applications developed by Zix Corporation (PocketScript®) (NASD: ZIXI) and DrFirst (Rcopia™). The companies are supporting members of the Collaborative.

The eRx Collaborative has made it easy for physicians and other prescribers who participate in multiple health plan networks to prescribe for all patients via a handheld device and/or Web browser. The health plans have met their initial goal of providing sponsorship to 3,400 prescribers including the device, license, six months of Internet connectivity where applicable, and one year of service.

These prescribers are able to access enhanced information when prescribing for patients in participating plans, such as patient eligibility and formulary information. In addition, the program enables prescribers to:

- Access patient-specific drug histories to determine the patient's current and past prescriptions
- Create new and renew prescriptions electronically
- Send prescriptions for non-controlled substances directly to the pharmacy via fax or by Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and/or print the prescription to paper
- Check for drug-drug and drug-allergy interactions
- Check for formulary coverage
- Access a drug reference guide

More research is being conducted on the 2005 results to further understand the safety aspects of using ePrescribing systems.

The eRx Collaborative is evaluating the best way to expand awareness and adoption of ePrescribing in Massachusetts in 2006.

About the eRx Collaborative

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA), Tufts Health Plan, Neighborhood Health Plan, Zix Corporation and DrFirst have formed a collaboration to offer physicians a comprehensive ePrescribing program. The program is expected to improve patient safety and reduce medical costs.

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