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eRx Collaborative Boosts Patient Safety with 8,000 Prescriptions Changed in June
Record number of electronic prescriptions changed as a result of drug-drug and drug-allergy alerts

BOSTON — September 5, 2006 — The eRx Collaborative announced today that in June nearly 8,000 electronic prescriptions changed as a result of drug-drug or drug-allergy alerts, which is approximately 2 percent of electronic prescriptions written by Collaborative prescribers.

One of the Program's most common ePrescribing drug-drug interactions messages that results in a changed prescription is when Fluoxetine, more commonly known as the generic for Prozac, is concurrently prescribed with Tramadol, the generic for Ultram. Both of these drugs have an effect on serotonin and excess levels in the brain can cause serious or potentially life-threatening side effects.

The Massachusetts-based eRx Collaborative continues to lead the industry with 5.6 million total electronic prescriptions sent to date by the program's prescribers. The total number of electronic prescriptions for Q1 and Q2 is more than 2.2 million – on track to double the amount of prescriptions sent in 2005.

The increased impact of ePrescribing on patient safety continues to be validated by industry research and recommendations. In a recent announcement highlighting findings from a new report published by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), medication errors were found to be among the most common medical errors, harming at least 1.5 million Americans per year. The report

also states that paper-based prescribing is associated with higher error rates, and ePrescribing is safer because it eliminates problems with handwriting legibility and acts as a decision-support tool by automatically alerting prescribers to possible interactions, allergies, and other potential problems. The report said that by 2008 all health care providers should have plans in place to write prescriptions electronically. By 2010 all providers should be using ePrescribing systems and all pharmacies should be able to receive prescriptions electronically.

The eRx Collaborative continues to be a strong advocate of ePrescribing technology and has recently formed the MA eRx Steering Committee. This is the first collaboration of its kind, which includes insurers, technology vendors, pharmacies and other organizations involved in the prescription process.

“Together as a committee, we are aiming to expand the scope of ePrescribing in the state of Massachusetts to further improve patient safety, affordability and quality of care,” explained James Glauber, MD, MPH, Medical Director, Neighborhood Health Plan

“Tufts Health Plan remains proud to be part of the eRx Collaborative. Our participation reflects our continuing commitment to improving patient safety and finding innovative ways to keep health care affordable,” said Marianne Leahy, Vice President of Alliances.

“BCBSMA continues to evaluate ePrescribing’s impact on safety and affordability for our membership” said Vincent Plourde, Vice President of Provider Services at Blue Cross Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. “We are currently working with external researchers on patient safety studies, and have conducted an updated financial analysis. We have found that high electronic prescribers’ pharmacy costs went down 3 percent to 3.5 percent due to improved utilization of preferred brands and generics that were lower cost. This is double the savings found in the preliminary 2005 analysis. Members on average save \$20 to \$25 for each electronic prescription changed in favor of a preferred brand or generic. For members who take maintenance medications, the savings could be as much as \$250 per medication per year. This demonstrates the affordability value that the eRx Collaborative is bringing to Massachusetts, and we look forward to having more results on patient safety in 2007.”

By the end of this year, the eRx Collaborative will work to:

- Double the amount of electronic prescriptions compared to 2005
- Recruit and deploy at least 800 new prescribers
- Share lessons learned and best practices based on our ePrescribing experience
- Continue evaluating ePrescribing impact on quality, safety and affordability

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA), Tufts Health Plan and Neighborhood Health Plan (NHP) 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 and other prescribing clinicians the ability to improve patient safety and increase healthcare affordability. The eRx Collaborative uses applications developed by Zix Corporation (PocketScript®) (NASD: ZIXI) and DrFirst (Rcopia™).

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. In 2006 the eRx Collaborative has been recognizing and rewarding active users by sponsoring a second license year upon their expiration from the Program.

ePrescribers 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
- Receive renewal requests from the pharmacy electronically
- Check for drug-drug and drug-allergy interactions
- Access a drug reference guide

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

About the eRx Collaborative

The eRx Collaborative was formed by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA), Tufts Health Plan and Neighborhood Health Plan (NHP) with technology partners DrFirst, Inc and Zix Corporation (ZixCorp[®]), (Nasdaq: ZIXI), to collaboratively promote and enable the use of electronic prescribing in Massachusetts to improve patient safety, health care affordability, quality and delivery.

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