
Summary of Findings ePrescribing Physician Assessment Study

The Southeastern Michigan ePrescribing Initiative (SEMI) is a coalition involving the three major U.S. automakers – General Motors, Ford and Chrysler – as well as the United Auto Workers, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, the Health Alliance Plan, Henry Ford Medical Group, Medco Health Solutions, CVS/Caremark, RxHub and SureScripts. Established in 2005, SEMI's mission is to encourage the adoption and use of ePrescribing technology among Michigan physicians in order to reduce medication errors and lower healthcare costs. Presently there are almost 3,000 physicians participating in the SEMI program transmitting more than 300,000 ePrescriptions each month.

ePrescribing involves the electronic transmission of a prescription, rather than a hand-written version. The benefits of ePrescribing include improved patient safety, streamlined medical processes and reduced healthcare costs. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) estimate that ePrescribing technology could eliminate as many as 2 million harmful drug events each year. Despite these benefits, only about three percent of U.S. physicians actively use ePrescribing in their practices. A key reason for the limited utilization is medical practitioners' apprehension and skepticism towards ePrescribing technology and its value.

In order to gain insight into clinicians' attitudes toward and experiences with ePrescribing technology, SEMI commissioned a survey of physician practices that had implemented the technology through the SEMI program. HaldyMcIntosh & Associates, a marketing research firm, conducted the survey and analyzed the results.

Physicians and staff from 500 medical practices participated in the survey which was conducted in January 2008. Physicians and other staff members responsible for writing prescriptions provided insight on their experience of using ePrescribing technology in servicing their patients' health care needs. Issues addressed in the survey included frequency of use, functionality of the system, perceived benefits, satisfaction ratings, implementation challenges and system enhancements. The results of the survey are summarized below.

Overall Assessment and Satisfaction

Overall the respondents' experience with ePrescribing was extremely positive.

- For 9 out of 10, ePrescribing met or exceeded expectations
- Over 70 percent are very satisfied with the ePrescribing system
- Close to 70 percent highly agree that ePrescribing improves the quality of patient care

Safety

Medical practitioners widely acknowledge the safety benefits of ePrescribing.

- About 75 percent highly agree ePrescribing improves patient safety
- Nearly 65 percent of the physicians reported at least one change in a prescription due to a safety alert
- Approximately 70 percent were very satisfied with the ease of identifying drug-to-allergy and drug-to-drug interactions

[Recent statistics from SEMI's program regarding reductions in medical errors are provided in Attachment 1 (Page 3).]

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System Use

ePrescribing was extensively incorporated into the practice's operating procedures.

- Over 80 percent of prescriptions are transmitted electronically
- Over 40 percent of prescribers say they write only ePrescriptions

Efficiency Improvements

For the majority of respondents, ePrescribing streamlines the prescription process --- saving time, improving productivity and eliminating administrative inefficiencies. However, some respondents, albeit a minority, disagreed.

- 72 percent experienced a reduction in communications with pharmacies – for 40 percent, the reduction was substantial
- 71 percent highly agree that a patient's transaction at the pharmacy is faster and easier
- More than 50 percent highly agree ePrescribing saves clinicians time and increases productivity, yet a minority (16 percent) highly disagree

Savings

The medical practitioners' views on monetary savings are mixed. While they're more apt to prescribe lower-cost drugs, they don't see a direct connection with saving patients money

- 2 out of 3 respondents are more likely to prescribe a generic or plan-preferred drug with ePrescribing, a clear action that translates to significant savings for the patient and health plan sponsor
- About 25 percent highly agree ePrescribing will save patients' money and reduce a practice's costs, but 20 percent highly disagree

Implementation Challenges and System Enhancements

Although there was a lack in consensus as to perceived barriers to using ePrescribing, there was substantial agreement as to proposed system enhancements.

- While more than 40 percent were unable to articulate any implementation barriers, others identified technical capabilities and interfaces as factors limiting system adoption
- More than 80 percent identified as highly attractive the following system enhancements:
 - Ability to indicate whether prior authorization is required
 - Ability to receive prior authorization at point of care
 - Ability to transmit to the pharmacy a "cancel refill" notice

Summary

Analysis of this recent survey indicates that a majority of ePrescribers recognize the value of the system and incorporate its use in their individual practices. ePrescribing met or exceeded the expectations of 90 percent of the respondents and the system is used to transmit more than 80 percent of the practices' prescriptions. There was wide agreement on a substantial number of benefits ePrescribing provides, but there was less of a consensus around cost savings for both the patient and the practice.

Charts 1 and 2 summarize the results of the survey graphically (Pages 4 and 5).

**Attachment 1
SEMI Reports Substantial Reduction in Medication Error Risks**

Since the inception of SEMI's program, nearly 3,000 participating physicians have generated almost 7.5 million prescriptions using ePrescribing technology. Based on an analysis conducted in October 2007, SEMI found that ePrescribing substantially improved patient safety by alerting physicians of risks related to drug interactions and other potential medication problems. These alerts resulted in a significant number of prescription changes that prevented possible adverse events. In addition, the analysis indicated that formulary compliance also improved.

The review of 3.3 million electronic prescriptions showed:

- A severe or moderate drug-to-drug alert was sent to physicians for more than 1 million prescriptions (33 percent), resulting in nearly 423,000 (41 percent) of those prescriptions being changed or canceled by the prescribing doctor
- More than 100,000 medication allergy alerts were presented, of which more than 41,000 (41 percent) were acted upon;
- When a formulary alert was presented, 39 percent of the time the physician changed the prescription to comply with formulary requirements

These results show ePrescribing can have a substantive impact on patient safety and overall health care costs

Chart 1

What Physician Practices Think of ePrescribing

Overall

Met or exceeded expectations

Satisfied overall

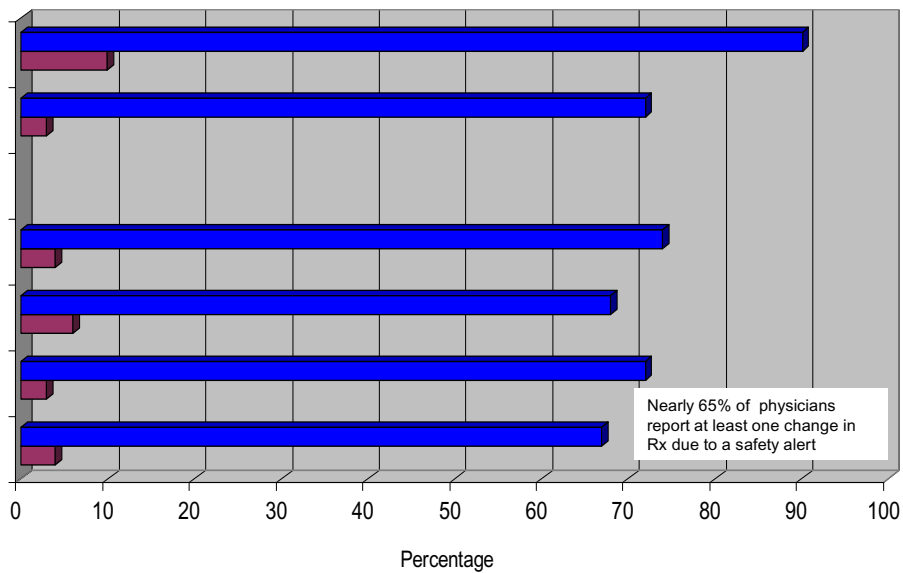
Safety

Improves safety

Improves quality of patient care

Easy to ID drug-to-allergy interaction

Easy to ID drug-to-drug interaction



Based on SEMI ePrescribing Survey conducted by HaldyMcIntosh, January 2008

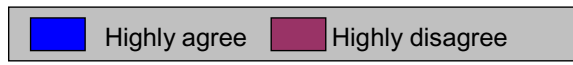
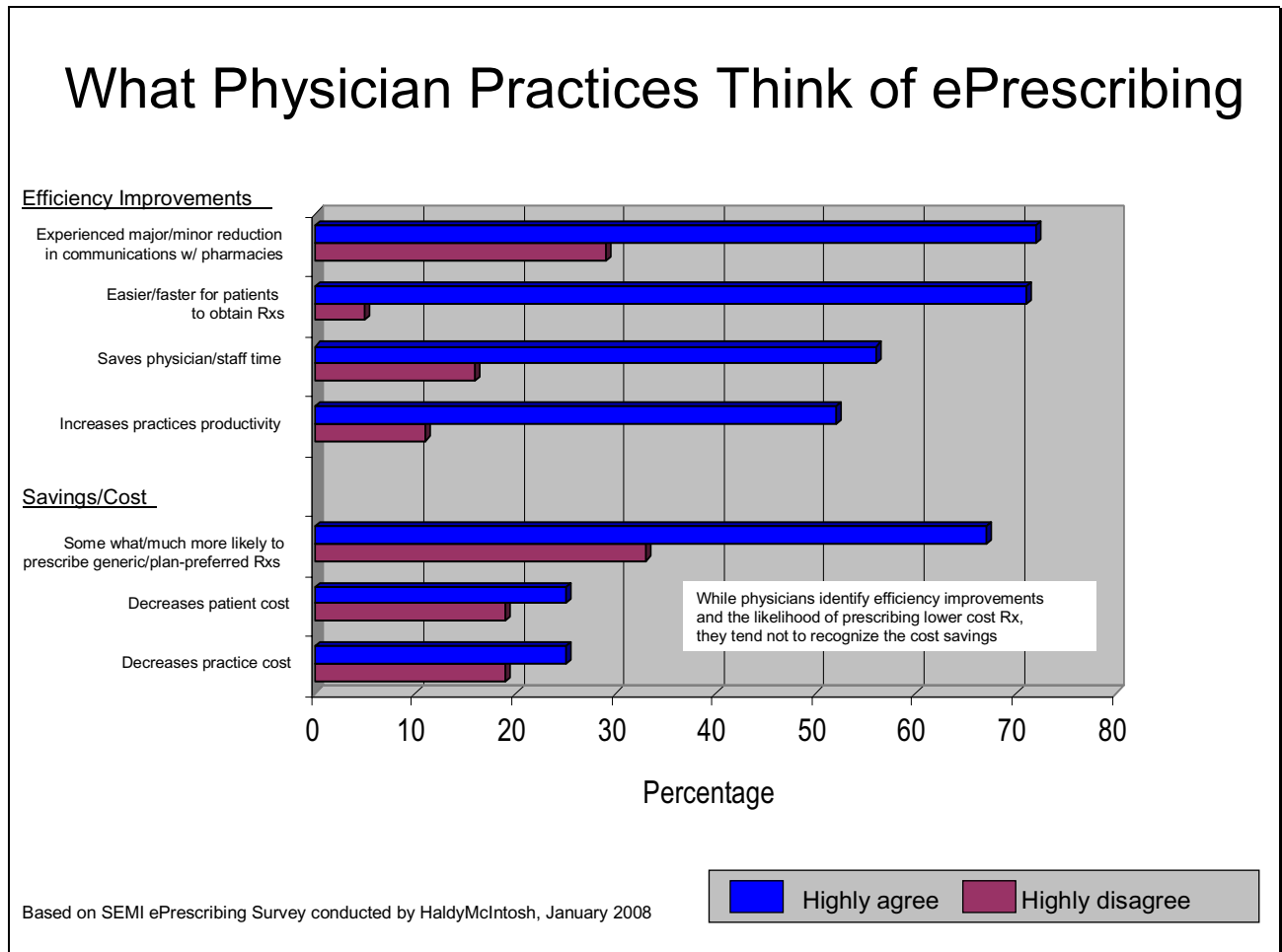


Chart 2



Source: Southeast Michigan E-prescribing Initiative, Detroit.