

Electronic Transfer of Prescriptions (eTP) an important step towards improved medication management

Electronic transfer of prescriptions (eTP) — the secure transfer of prescription information between prescribing and dispensing systems — is an important early step towards an e-health-enabled healthcare system and improving medication management. While the majority of GP practices have access to eTP through their prescribing software, many are not yet using this technology.

“Ensuring that medicines information can be shared is the foundation for a range of healthcare benefits for both prescribers and consumers,” said Dr Jonathan Dartnell, Executive Manager, Innovation and Learning at NPS.

“eTP has the ability to improve medication management now, and we encourage GPs to look at how it may work within their practice, especially as we move closer to an e-health enabled healthcare system.”

There are currently two eTP services available — eRx Script Exchange and MediSecure — which may improve coordinated care and streamline work flows for general practices and pharmacies. Both services work with some of the most commonly used prescribing software systems, but many prescribers may be unaware they have access to eTP or how to enable the function within their systems by turning it on or registering.

“eTP is accessible to the majority of GPs now, so it’s worth investigating how you can access it through your prescribing software and how best to incorporate it into your practice,” said Dr Dartnell.

eTP provides a range of benefits, like reduction of transcription errors and improved communication between prescribers and dispensers, and it is another mechanism to improve patient safety.

In the coming months NPS will help raise awareness of eTP as a tool for medication management, and will work with pharmacies and general practices using eTP to develop practical resources to facilitate uptake.

“NPS welcomes the eTP specifications recently developed by NEHTA, which have had broad clinical input. These will form the basis for an Australian Technical Specification for electronic prescriptions, and provide a framework for implementation,” said Dr Dartnell.

“The adoption of common standards and specifications will ensure users can easily send and receive prescription information between different systems.”

As eTP systems evolve they may offer prescribers, pharmacists and other health professionals an increased range of benefits, including access to consolidated lists of patients’ prescribed and dispensed medications.

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Media enquiries: Stephanie Childs on (02) 8217 8667, 0419 618 365 or schild@nps.org.au

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