

HEALTH CARE

NEWS AND INFORMATION

Volume 14 Number 22

June 29, 2007

Health Care: News and Information is a service of the Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC) to help our readers stay fully informed about the latest health care issues as we work to advance a high-quality health care system.

Jim Edwards, Editor

www.hlc.org

Rx by Computer Shown to Cut Errors

A new study has found that computerized drug orders dramatically reduce medication errors.

- The report published in the journal *Health Services Research* analyzed 12 separate studies of hospitals.
- A public health researcher at the University of Minnesota headed the effort.
- This research shows the promise for quality improvement and patient safety that could be derived from e-health.

Medication errors occur more frequently when relying on handwritten prescriptions. But these are generally preventable, with systemic changes.

- Every year, half a million hospitalized Americans suffer injury or death from medication errors.
- About a quarter of hospital patients experience these problems. They may involve getting the wrong drug or dosage, the right drug at the wrong time or no medication at all.
- More than three out of five medication errors happen because of unreadable handwriting on prescriptions or mistakes in transcribing them.
- Today, not quite a tenth of U.S. hospitals have electronic prescription systems. And they can take one to three years to implement.

This study showed that switching to a computerized system can markedly lower a hospital's medication error rate.

- American hospitals that adopted computer drug ordering systems saw medication errors fall by 66 percent.
- Changing to electronic drug ordering systems caused the most improvement at hospitals with the highest medication error rates – those of over 12 percent.

– MORE –

- The only way in which these e-health tools didn't reduce errors was in prescribing the wrong

medicine.

As health professionals and policymakers look to advance e-health, research increasingly highlights the promise of electronic health care. As this latest study shows, e-health may reduce medical errors. It can also help lower costs, improve quality and efficiency, and benefit both providers and patients.

The Healthcare Leadership Council, representing the innovators in each sector of the health care industry, is committed to advancing a market-based health care system that values innovation and provides affordable, high-quality care.

HLC field directors:

Steve Knuth (651) 225-8449
(IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, WI)

Darren Katz (404) 885-9351
(AL, FL, GA, SC)

Paul Pearson (405) 488-0541
(AZ, CO, KS, NE, NM, OK, TX, UT)

Brad Crone (919) 834-8994
(KY, MD, NC, TN, VA, WV)

Larry Krutchik (818) 728-3355
(CA, ID, MT, NV, OR, WA)

Brian Feldman (404) 885-1723
(AR, CT, LA, MA, MO, MS, NY, RI)

Tom Maher (603) 228-3342
(DE, ME, NH, NJ, OH, PA, VT)

If this fax arrives at an incorrect fax machine, if additional individuals in your company would like to receive a copy, if a recipient would like to be removed from the distribution list, or if a name or fax number needs to be changed in our system, please fax this information to Amanda Uherek at 202-296-9561 or e-mail her at auherek@hlc.org.

**Healthcare Leadership Council
1001 Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 550 South
Washington, DC 20004
(202) 452-8700
www.hlc.org**