

DEA Releases Information Regarding ePrescribing of Controlled Substances

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Office of Diversion Control/ODL recently sent out letters to physicians authorized to prescribe controlled substances to outline the revised regulations that optionally allow Electronic Prescriptions of Controlled Substances (EPCS). This letter provides guidance as the industry moves forward in becoming compliant with the interim final rule.

Emdeon, a leading provider of healthcare revenue and payment cycle management solutions, is able to offer a unique perspective on EPCS as we are the only ePrescribing network with market-based experience in ePrescribing of controlled substances from our participation in the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) EPCS research project. This project has served as a model for controlled substances ePrescribing since the project began in 2007.

The DEA states that persons wishing to electronically prescribe controlled substances must select software that meets the requirements of the interim final rule. "As of June 1, 2010, only those electronic prescription applications that comply with all of DEA's requirements as set forth in 21 C.F.R. part 1311 may be used by DEA-registered prescribing practitioners to sign and transmit controlled substance prescriptions electronically."

We would like to reassure all physicians that are currently using an ePrescribing system that no vendor is expected to be able to support this new rule on its June 1, 2010 effective date. Many ePrescribing systems are evaluating the new rule and determining their requirements and changes necessary to become fully compliant with the rule. For example, the rule requires both physician and pharmacy applications to be certified before going live and to have an audit process in place. It will take time for certification organizations to be put in place for the CAs (Certifying Authorities), CSPs (Credentialing Service Providers), and for third party certification or audit requirements to be met by physician and pharmacy application providers.

In our formal response to the interim final rule, we recommended the DEA work with the industry representative groups to establish interim implementation guidelines which may allow for adoption variances while long term infrastructure is developed and implemented to meet the minimum requirements of the interim final rule. Emdeon is working with other industry leaders including the National Council for Prescription Drug Programs (NCPDP) to develop implementation strategies that meet the new rule while understanding the current limitations and complications with modifying standards and application changes quickly.

As we move toward full compliance, Emdeon will continue to offer assistance in developing implementation guidelines for the Final Rule within existing workflows, standards, certifications and technology changes. Furthermore, Emdeon supports efforts to move the industry forward in complying with the new DEA regulations and welcomes the opportunity to work with the DEA, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the National Council for Prescription Drug Programs (NCPDP), American Medication Association (AMA), Medical Group Management Association (MGMA), American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) and others, to ensure a smooth transition and successful implementation as the rules are finalized.

We encourage you to contact your software/application provider to discuss their plans to support this new rule. Also feel free to contact us with any questions that you have regarding ePrescribing in general, or specifically EPCS.

toll free: 866-379-6389
email: erxnetworksupport@emdeon.com
website: www.emdeon.com