

Minnesota named top state for e-prescribing

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Minnesota's strategy to promote electronic-prescribing has resulted in a No. 1 ranking on a national survey.

"E-prescribing has been a collaborative effort in Minnesota, and we want to congratulate the providers, pharmacists, health plans, patient groups, and public health professionals who have all joined together to improve the safety and efficiency of prescribing medicine in Minnesota," said Minnesota Commissioner of Health Dr. Ed Ehlinger. Surescripts announced today that Minnesota achieved the highest rate of e-prescribing use in the nation during 2011 to capture the No. 1 ranking in its 7th annual Safe-Rx Awards. The rankings are determined by an analysis of data that measures electronic prescribing use by physicians, pharmacies and payers in each state.

E-prescribing is an important quality of care issue. It enables a provider to electronically send an accurate and understandable prescription directly from the clinic or hospital to a pharmacy. Research has shown that e-prescribing reduces medication error rates by almost sevenfold in community-based office practices, including near elimination of errors due to illegible handwriting.

Minnesota's success is due to its collaborative approach, which is led by the Minnesota e-Health Initiative, a public-private collaborative established in 2004 that is guided by a 25-member advisory committee appointed by the commissioner of health to provide advice and feedback on policy making related to health information technology (HIT) in Minnesota. In 2008, the Minnesota Legislature enacted an e-prescribing mandate. The mandate required prescribers, pharmacists and pharmacies, and pharmacy benefit managers to be e-prescribing by January 1, 2011. In June 2009, the Minnesota e-Health Initiative released *A Practical Guide to Electronic Prescribing*

. In 2011 and again in 2012, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) launched the Minnesota e-Health Connectivity Grant Program for Health Information Exchange to provide financial support. Minnesota has made significant progress, yet gaps remain. In 2011, 91 percent of pharmacies, 68 percent of clinics, 39 percent of hospitals, and 3 percent of nursing homes were e-prescribing.

"Though the trends are heading in the right direction and it is nice to receive a No. 1 ranking, we are not resting on our laurels. There is still a lot of work to be done to completely eliminate a reliance on paper prescriptions in Minnesota," said Marty LaVenture, director of Office of Health Information Technology and e-health at the Minnesota Department of Health.

LaVenture also is this year's recipient of the Safe-Rx Evangelist Award accepted on behalf of the Minnesota e-Health Initiative, which is given annually to the person or organization whose work has made an extraordinary impact on the awareness and use of e-prescribing as a critical means of reducing medication errors.