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NATIONAL RANKING NAMES MASSACHUSETTS # 1 STATE FOR ELECTRONIC PRESCRIPTIONS

Senator John Kerry Accepts Safe-Rx™ Award for Bay State, Highlights Success Based on Collaboration Between Physicians, Pharmacists, Payers and Health Systems

Individuals Across the U.S. Can Now Go Online to Check Their State's Ranking

WASHINGTON, D.C. – March 4, 2008 – At an event on Capitol Hill today, the nation's community pharmacies announced that Massachusetts ranks first in the nation when it comes to transmitting prescriptions electronically, versus by fax or via prescription pad. According to the results of a nationwide audit of electronic prescriptions transmitted in 2007, it was determined that prescribers in the Bay State sent more than 4 million prescriptions electronically, representing 13.4 percent of all eligible prescriptions in the state, a figure that is more than six times the national average. For this accomplishment, Massachusetts was recognized, along with nine other states, as part of the third annual Safe-Rx Awards.

"This is a proud moment for the state of Massachusetts, as the nation's leader in e-prescribing, and a star innovator of medical technology for the world," said U.S. Senator John Kerry (D-Mass.), who in December of 2007 led a bipartisan effort to introduce the Medicare Electronic Medication and Safety Protection Act ("E-MEDS"). The E-MEDS bill proposes to offer physicians reimbursements for investing in e-prescribing technology, as well as incentive payments each time a prescription is transmitted electronically and the claim is submitted through Medicare. "This dedication to technology and efficiency by the Massachusetts care providers, physicians and pharmacists who have earned this honor, is testament to their sincere concern for patient safety and their real commitment to saving lives," said Senator Kerry. "I am thrilled to receive this award on behalf of my state and its care providers, and it is with their tireless work in mind that I will fight to pass the electronic prescribing legislation I have introduced in the Senate."

"Electronic prescribing is an essential part of modern health care, because it's so effective in reducing costs and avoiding medical errors," said U.S. Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.). "It's gratifying that for the second year in a row, Massachusetts is receiving the Safe-Rx Award for its leadership in adopting this technology. We're clearly in the forefront on e-prescribing, and our citizens are getting better care because of it."

"The Safe-Rx Awards are a wonderful way to recognize the accomplishments of local groups that are working hard to collaborate on creative strategies and solutions to accelerate the adoption of e-prescribing," said Newt Gingrich, founder of the Center for Health Transformation. "The Safe-Rx Awards were created to highlight the importance of efforts to increase the number of physicians using e-prescribing. Everyone knows that e-prescribing saves lives, is much more efficient, allows for better outcomes, and reduces costs for everyone. We should all be encouraging our physicians to use this kind of practical technology to protect their patients."

Electronic prescribing, or "e-prescribing," is widely acknowledged as a means of enhancing patient safety. The Safe-Rx Award is given annually by the nation's community pharmacies to the top 10 e-prescribing states in the nation, and to three prescribers in each winning state who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in their use of e-prescribing technology. Massachusetts' first-place ranking represents the second year in a row that it has finished as the # 1 e-prescribing state in the nation.

Top 10 E-Prescribing States: The Third Annual* Safe-Rx Award Recipients

1. Massachusetts
2. Rhode Island
3. Nevada
4. Delaware
5. Michigan
6. Maryland
7. North Carolina
8. Arizona*
9. Connecticut*
10. Washington

**New to the top 10*

The National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS), the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) and SureScripts® created the Safe-Rx Awards to raise awareness of e-prescribing as a more secure, accurate and informed means of prescribing patients' medication. The Safe-Rx Awards are based on an analysis of data from new prescriptions and refill responses electronically transmitted over the Pharmacy Health Information Exchange™, operated by SureScripts. States are ranked according to the number of prescriptions routed electronically in 2007 as a percentage of the total number of prescriptions eligible for electronic routing.

What About My State?

Individuals who are interested in finding out how their state is progressing in its efforts to move from paper-based prescribing to e-prescribing can go to the Safe-Rx Awards Web site at www.surescripts.com/Safe-Rx. There they will find a complete ranking of all 50 states and the District of Columbia, based on e-prescribing activity. The Web site also contains a detailed progress report on each state's efforts to date, including:

- Prior years' rankings, based on e-prescribing activity in 2005 and 2006
- The number and percentage of prescription transactions routed electronically in 2007
- The number and percentage of prescribers e-prescribing
- The number and percentage of pharmacies e-prescribing

Secretary Leavitt Honored With Safe-Rx Evangelist Award

This year's Safe-Rx Awards follow a year of significant moves by federal policy makers to support the adoption of e-prescribing.

Under the leadership of Secretary Michael Leavitt, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has proposed linking the use of e-prescribing to Medicare reimbursements. More specifically, Secretary Leavitt has proposed that Congress require doctors to use e-prescribing in order to get higher rates of compensation.

This effort coincided with a proposal by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to adopt additional technical standards for use by participants in the Medicare Part D program when they prescribe electronically. By requiring the use of technical standards for electronically sharing medication history along with formulary and benefit information, CMS will have passed another important milestone in its ongoing work to help guide the nation toward a more efficient, safe and interoperable system of health care.

These and other initiatives illustrate how Secretary Leavitt has carried through on two principles that he outlined early in his administration: first, that he would initiate a collaboration between industry and government to identify and gain consensus on the technical standards necessary for sharing health information; and second, that he would use the power of Medicare – as the nation's largest payer – to promote the adoption of health information technology. By advancing

the technical standards that make e-prescribing possible and by backing incentives for prescribers to stop using paper, he has led the way in improving patient safety and preventing medication errors. For his work and outstanding leadership, the nation's community pharmacies today awarded Secretary Leavitt the Safe-Rx™ Evangelist Award.

The Safe-Rx Evangelist Award goes to a single person or organization whose advocacy has made an exceptionally positive impact on the awareness and prevention of medication errors. It is the highest honor presented on behalf of the nation's community pharmacies, whose work to improve communications between physicians, pharmacists and patients has led the nation toward a safer prescribing process. In 2007, the Safe-Rx Evangelist Award went to the Institute of Medicine for its breakthrough report *Preventing Medication Errors*.

"Broad adoption of health information technology such as electronic prescribing will help save lives, money and time," said Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt. "We have a tremendous opportunity to transform health care – not only to improve the quality of care provided, but also to change the way medicine is practiced and delivered. Thank you for this award. Continuing to work together, we can make medical clipboards and prescription pads a thing of the past."

E-Prescribing: An Opportunity to Save Time, Dollars and Lives

There remains a sizable opportunity to increase the adoption and utilization of e-prescribing across the country – including in all the top 10 Safe-Rx states. Although SureScripts estimates that more than 100 million prescription transactions will be routed electronically in 2008, this figure only represents approximately 7 percent of eligible prescriptions (see *National Progress Report on E-Prescribing* at www.surescripts.com/report). The realization of e-prescribing's full potential represents an unprecedented opportunity to improve patient safety and the efficiency of the prescribing process.

According to the Center for Information Technology Leadership (CITL), use of electronic prescribing systems with a network connection to pharmacy and advanced decision-support capabilities could help prevent 130,000 life-threatening medication errors annually.

By eliminating paper from the prescribing process, e-prescribing also has been proven to offer significant time savings, as removing the need for phone calls and faxes allows prescribers and their staffs more time to care for their patients.

A study by the Medical Group Management Association's Group Practice Research Network estimated that administrative complexity related to prescriptions costs a practice approximately \$15,700 a year for each full-time physician on staff – a figure that does not even take into consideration the time spent managing faxes. Multiplying that figure by an estimated 563,000 office-based physicians currently practicing and prescribing medications in the United States reveals an opportunity for e-prescribing to significantly reduce the up to estimated \$8.8 billion worth of physician and staff time spent on the phone clarifying prescription information.

For Physicians

In an effort to help states improve their ranking, the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), the Medical Group Management Association (MGMA), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American College of Cardiology (ACC) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) are launching a nationwide program designed to boost adoption and utilization of e-prescribing technology. Created in conjunction with The Center for Improving Medication Management (www.TheCIMM.org), the program aims to help an estimated 150,000 prescribers located throughout the United States that are currently using e-prescribing and electronic medical record software to fax prescriptions to pharmacies. Starting January 1, 2009, all computer-generated prescriptions covered by the Medicare Part D program must be

transmitted electronically and not via fax. The “Get Connected” program is an opportunity to help these physicians make the transition from fax to electronic prescribing before the deadline arrives.

For more information about how to start prescribing electronically, physicians and practice management professionals can go to www.GetRxConnected.com. The site includes an online tool designed to help physicians determine whether their practices already possess the technology needed to establish a direct, two-way, computer-to-computer connection with their local pharmacies. Physicians can also call with questions about the assessment or about electronic prescribing in general: 1-866-RxReady (1-866-797-3239).

For Patients

For patients, e-prescribing means a safer and more efficient prescribing process – no more lost prescriptions, no more trips to the pharmacy to drop off prescriptions and no more illegible handwriting for pharmacists to interpret. Patients who are interested in learning more about how electronic prescribing benefits them and their families can visit www.LearnAboutEprescriptions.com. The Web site also features helpful advice about how patients can help their physicians “Get Connected” to their local community pharmacies.

About NACDS

The National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) represents the nation’s leading retail chain pharmacies and suppliers, helping them better meet the changing needs of their patients and customers. Chain pharmacies operate more than 38,000 pharmacies, employ 112,000 pharmacists, fill more than 2.3 billion prescriptions yearly, and have annual sales of nearly \$700 billion. Other members include more than 1,000 suppliers of products and services to the chain drug store industry. NACDS’ international membership has grown to include 80 members from 25 countries. For more information about NACDS, visit www.nacds.org.

About NCPA

The National Community Pharmacists Association, founded in 1898, represents the nation’s community pharmacists, including the owners of more than 24,000 pharmacies. The nation’s independent pharmacies, independent pharmacy franchises, and independent chains dispense nearly half of the nation’s retail prescription medicines.

About SureScripts

Founded by the pharmacy industry in 2001, SureScripts® operates the Pharmacy Health Information Exchange™, which facilitates the secure electronic transmission of prescription information between physicians and pharmacists and provides access to lifesaving information about patients during emergencies or routine care. Working collaboratively with health plans, health systems, technology vendors and health policy leaders, SureScripts is committed to improving the safety, efficiency, and quality of the prescribing process. More information about SureScripts is available at www.surescripts.com.

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