



**CONTACT:**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Susan Leahy  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts  
617-246-4823  
[susan.leahy-schuh@bcbsma.com](mailto:susan.leahy-schuh@bcbsma.com)

Irene Froehlich  
DrFirst  
240-671-3320  
[ifroehlich@drfirst.com](mailto:ifroehlich@drfirst.com)

Patti Embry-Tautenhan  
Tufts Health Plan  
617-972-1090  
[Patti\\_Embry-Tautenhan@tufts-health.com](mailto:Patti_Embry-Tautenhan@tufts-health.com)

Farrah Corley  
ZixCorp  
214-370-2175  
[fcorley@zixcorp.com](mailto:fcorley@zixcorp.com)

Sonia Javier-Obinger  
Neighborhood Health Plan  
617-772-5660  
[Sonia\\_Javier-Obinger@nhp.org](mailto:Sonia_Javier-Obinger@nhp.org)

**eRx Collaborative Continues to Lead the Industry with 13.5 Million  
Electronic Prescriptions Transmitted to date  
104,000 prescriptions changed as a result of drug alerts**

BOSTON — February 5, 2008 — The eRx Collaborative today announced that during 2007, nearly 5 million electronic prescriptions were transmitted through the Collaborative. The program transmitted 8.4 percent more electronic prescriptions over the same period in 2006. This brings the four-year, industry-leading total of electronic prescriptions transmitted through Collaborative prescribers to 13.5 million. In addition, the eRx Collaborative deployed more than 471 new prescribers during 2007, surpassing this year's annual goal of 385 new prescribers.

The opportunity to catch potentially harmful drug-drug interactions or drug-allergy interactions is a hallmark safety feature of electronic prescribing. Last year, approximately 104,000 electronic prescriptions were changed due to drug safety alerts. This represents 2.1 percent of total electronic prescriptions that were changed or cancelled due to drug messaging. This number increased after mid-year, and remained steady for the latter half of the year at around 2.5 percent. The highest number of electronic prescriptions that were changed or cancelled in a single month was 9,960.

One example of a typical alert is when Zoloft and Trazodone are taken together. Patients need to be clinically monitored to avoid serious or life-threatening increases of serotonin levels in the brain. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts engaged researchers at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Inc. to investigate the safety and economic benefits of these alerts in terms of preventing adverse drug events for patients and the potential cost savings associated with the alerts. The study is expected to be completed early in 2008.

A recent survey by the participants of the program showed that 81 percent of prescribers would recommend e-prescribing to a colleague, up from 75 percent in 2006. The percentage of prescribers that say e-prescribing results in fewer calls from pharmacies rose to 66 from 55 in 2006. Seventy-one percent of respondents say e-prescribing saves time, with the majority saving one hour to two hours per day due to e-prescribing technology.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA), Tufts Health Plan and Neighborhood Health Plan (NHP) are members of the eRx Collaborative. The plans formed the Collaborative in 2003 to jumpstart the use of comprehensive e-prescribing technology in Massachusetts. The program offers physicians and other prescribing clinicians the ability to improve patient safety and increase healthcare affordability. The eRx Collaborative uses applications developed by Zix Corporation (PocketScript®) (NASD: ZIXI) and DrFirst (Rcopia™).

“ In 2006, those providers who used an e-prescribing device were able to choose more cost-effective drugs and saved 5 percent on their drug costs relative to those prescribers who did not use this technology,” said Steven Fox, Vice President of Provider Network Management. “Of that savings, BCBSMA members saved approximately \$800,000 in co-payments associated with their prescriptions.”

“The benefits achieved through e-prescribing adoption are significant. We are pleased to participate in this meaningful effort promoting patient safety, quality and health care affordability,” said Miriam Sullivan, Tufts Health Plan Vice President of Allied Health and Pharmacy Services.”

“This technology continues to impress, both as a means of promoting safe prescribing and as a pathway toward full implementation of an EMR. I hope that patients also recognize that they are receiving a higher standard of care when their physician utilizes e-prescribing on a routine basis,” said James Glauber, MD, MPH, Medical Director, Neighborhood Health Plan.

Last year, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts earned the number one ranking at the second annual Safe-Rx Awards. 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 physicians in each winning state who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in their use of e-prescribing technology. Massachusetts’ first-place ranking last year represents a jump from its third-place finish in 2006.

As a continued leader and industry advocate for e-prescribing technology, the Collaborative formed the MA eRx Forum in 2006. This pioneering collaboration, which includes insurers, technology vendors, pharmacies and other organizations involved in the prescription process, has raised awareness of e-prescribing in the state and is working together to increase adoption. In partnership with the Massachusetts Medical Society, the eRx Forum developed a Continuing Medical Education (CME) course called Electronic Prescribing Education: How to Improve Medication Safety and Reduce Drug costs through e-prescribing. The CME is available for 2.5 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™, risk management study. The CME will be available in February 2008 via the Massachusetts Medical Society website: [www.mms.org](http://www.mms.org).

ePrescribers are able to access enhanced information when prescribing for patients in participating plans, such as patient eligibility and formulary information. In addition, the program enables prescribers to:

- Access patient-specific drug histories to determine the patient's current and past prescriptions
- Create new and renew prescriptions electronically
- Send prescriptions for non-controlled substances directly to the pharmacy via fax or by Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and/or print the prescription to paper
- Receive renewal requests from the pharmacy electronically
- Check for drug-drug and drug-allergy interactions
- Access a drug reference guide

The eRx Collaborative continue to sponsor new prescribers, and evaluate the best way to expand awareness and adoption of e-prescribing in Massachusetts for this year and beyond. The Collaborative views e-prescribing as a foundation to future practice technology and has seen evidence of this through our prescribers who have left the program to implement electronic medical records with e-prescribing functionality. A fully electronic practice is one of the pathways to reach the ultimate goal for healthcare: to improve patient safety, quality and delivery.

#### **About the eRx Collaborative**

The eRx Collaborative was formed by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA), Tufts Health Plan and Neighborhood Health Plan (NHP) with technology partners DrFirst, Inc and Zix Corporation (ZixCorp<sup>®</sup>), (Nasdaq: ZIXI), to collaboratively promote and enable the use of electronic prescribing in Massachusetts to improve patient safety, health care affordability, quality and delivery. For more information, visit our website

[www.erxcollaborative.org](http://www.erxcollaborative.org)

###