



## FACT SHEET ON THE DRUG INFORMATION SYSTEM STUDY

The fourth leading cause of death in Ontario is preventable adverse drug events. eHealth Ontario plans to introduce a two way electronic order communication (between prescribers and dispensers), comprising of electronic prescribing and electronic dispensing to reduce the number of these adverse drug events as well as many other prescribing problems. Problems with drug prescribing occur for various reasons. For example, physicians may prescribe medications that are not effective for certain conditions or medications that may interact with each other; people may be taking their medications incorrectly; they may also have conflicting prescriptions from several physicians or nurse practitioners; physicians may not monitor drug allergies in their patients or may prescribe the wrong dose.

eHealth Ontario and Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, with funding from Canada Health Infoway, is considering introducing this as the Drug Information System (DIS). This system will introduce and integrate electronic prescribing, electronic dispensing and electronic data interchange\* between the prescribers and dispensers, which could radically change the current process for prescribing and dispensing medicines. eHealth Ontario has currently issued a request for qualifications (RFQ) for the implementation of this provincial Drug Information System. The eHealth program from McMaster University wants to study the requirements of the people who will be most affected - the patients, prescribers (family physicians and nurse practitioners) and community pharmacists.

\*Electronic data interchange: It is the two way electronic order communication between physicians and pharmacists regarding the medications of patients.

eHealth Ontario feels that their Drug Information System, will help prevent problems with medications as listed above. They suggest that electronic prescribing can reduce 217,000 adverse drug events, 132,000 physician office visits, 20,000 hospitalizations and 2,200 deaths related directly to problems with drugs each year. These reductions will cut healthcare spending by \$350 million.

Before implementing such a large-scale system, the views of stakeholders (prescribers, dispensers and consumers) who use the healthcare system should be sought. Therefore we are using questionnaires to discover what is important for people who need medications, family physicians and nurse practitioners, and community pharmacists. eHealth Ontario will review what we find to ensure that Ontario's electronic prescribing system is as useful as possible for all.

The questionnaires will be distributed to primary practices and community pharmacies within Hamilton and the Greater Toronto Area. It will focus on what information should be transferred from a doctor's office to a community pharmacy. We also want to find out if stakeholders (prescribers, dispensers and consumers) have any worries about their data being secure and kept private.