

## ALLSCRIPTS NEPSI MORRIS HEIGHTS CASE STUDY

### Introduction

Morris Heights Health Center, a large community health center providing primary healthcare services in an underserved community of New York City, wanted to ensure better medication safety for its patients. By embracing a Web-based electronic prescribing (eRx) solution, one of Morris Heights' 10-clinician practice locations dramatically improved patient care and reduced drug errors while establishing a solid standard for patient safety.

Through various locations, Morris Heights Health Center has been providing quality primary healthcare to residents in the south Bronx for more than 25 years. Morris Heights clinics serve 45,000 patients each year, of which 37,000 are active medical patients. With active practices in HIV, women's health and pediatrics, as well as a busy diabetes clinic, Morris Heights serves many patients who concurrently take multiple medications. The large number of patients with complex health issues required a system that could verify drugs, dosages and durations, and check for allergies, drug-drug interactions, pregnancy-related issues and other patient-specific factors.

By the end of 2006, all clinicians at one of Morris Heights' clinics were successfully writing and sending electronic prescriptions for more than 5,000 patients. The clinic met or exceeded every goal established for the eRx solution. Based on that performance, Morris Heights is currently expanding its eRx solution to include mental health and dental practices within all of its clinics, improving care for its patients. Success with the Web-based eRx system ultimately helped Morris Heights embrace technology as a powerful tool in improving patient care and facilitated its move to using an electronic medical record (EMR) system.

### Goals

Morris Heights' clinicians were open to using technology to help address prescription loads and safety concerns. Clinic doctors wanted a solution to assist them with prescribing appropriate medicines in correct dosages and maintaining a secure, easy-to-read, easy-to-verify record of prescription and patient history.

Morris Heights' clinicians agreed that traditional prescribing methods are not effective in achieving safety and patient care goals. The team accepted the opportunity to be part of a pilot project with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOHMH) and New York's Clinical Directors Network (CDN). The NYCDOHMH and CDN selected a Web-based eRx solution from Allscripts for this project.

Dr. Akinola Fisher, a clinician at Morris Heights, said the practice's physicians wanted an eRx solution because they felt the technology would provide a safer method for prescribing medications. With the adoption of the eRx tool in February 2006, all 10 clinicians established the following objectives:

- Improve patient safety
- Increase record efficiency and improve medication lists while offering easy access to patient medication histories
- Reduce the volume of time-consuming call-backs from pharmacies (due to illegible prescriptions)
- Expedite the prescription process through electronic and fax prescription submission to pharmacies

### The Solution

After an extensive review of electronic prescribing products, the NYCDOHMH and CDN selected a Web-based eRx solution from Allscripts because it was faster, easier to use and could instantly alert

physicians to contraindications for medications at the point of prescribing. After beginning to use the new system, Dr. Fisher and the other clinicians soon discovered that it exceeded their expectations and brought additional advantages.

Most important, the clinic's new eRx solution immediately improved patient safety. By providing physicians an instant list of every medicine a patient is currently taking and has taken in the past, the eRx solution makes reviewing, selecting and prescribing a medication far easier and faster. By quickly linking clinicians to a complete clinical database, the eRx tool offers a safety double-check, reviewing all prescriptions for allergies, drug-drug interactions, overly high doses, pregnancy-related issues and other patient-specific factors. The system also searches for and eliminates duplicate prescriptions.

#### Quality Patient Interactions

One benefit of the eRx solution that surprised Morris Heights' physicians was an improvement in personalized patient care and medication compliance, especially for those patients taking multiple medications.

The eRx solution offers access to detailed patient education materials that explain each medication as well as those commonly taken together. Clinicians can review this information with patients during the visit and print the educational materials for them to take home.

"We use this information to talk through potential dosage or instruction concerns, discuss drug side effects and answer the types of questions patients normally have at the pharmacy," said Dr. Fisher. "Before (implementing this solution), patients would get their medicine, then have to decide whether to call us back, which would usually involve leaving a message. Then, they would have to wait for us to return their call. You can imagine how much time that takes."

Today the process is faster, easier and safer - for physicians and patients alike.

#### Legible and Safe

Another reason Morris Heights' clinicians chose to adopt the eRx solution was their commitment to ensuring that all prescriptions were legible. Especially for patients on multiple drugs that have different dosages and specific instructions for each, the eRx solution ensures that pharmacists—and patients—are able to read and understand instructions.

A print-out also helps patients easily review what, when and how much of each medicine they should take. The report also makes it easy for patients to share their prescribed medication schedule with other doctors or caregivers, ensuring a superior continuum of care.

#### Time Savings

Overall, Morris Heights' clinicians agree that they spend less time on the phone with pharmacists answering questions about their prescriptions. Dr. Fisher offered his personal experience: "I am confident that my time on the phone with pharmacists is drastically less because my prescriptions are more legible and easier for the pharmacist to get right."

Patients have also experienced time savings from the eRx tool. Often, clinicians review patient records before the first patient visit. Dr. Fisher explained that clinicians are now able to determine which patients need refills well in advance of their office visit. Prescriptions can be sent to the pharmacy before the work day so that, in most cases, medicines are filled and ready to be picked up when a patient arrives at the pharmacy.

"Patients love electronic prescribing," said Dr. Fisher. "They like being able to immediately see, read and understand their prescriptions before they head to the pharmacy." Patients also report measurable time savings while at the pharmacy because prescriptions can be sent faster, with less confusion and mistakes.

### Attitude Changes

After a brief false start in late 2005, Morris Heights' clinicians embraced the eRx solution in February 2006. From that point, momentum quickly grew. As more and more doctors and staff members added data to the system, they found the tool to be more valuable. Today, clinicians share information, and the solution is an indispensable tool in daily prescribing, medication management and routine patient care.

"Admittedly, the first time you use the electronic prescribing system, you don't see the time savings," said Dr. Fisher. "At our site, we had to input all of the patient data, and that takes time. But once everything is in, it's a lot easier. All you do from then on is just review, select and click, and the prescription is done."

(It should be noted that interfaces between the eRx solution and most practice management systems are available and eliminate the need to input patient data, saving time during the start up phase).

### Cost Savings

The eRx solution also has saved Morris Heights money. The clinics can now link prescription choices to most insurance plans including the New York Performance Management of Medicaid, enabling clinicians to determine if the medicines they want to prescribe or appropriate alternatives are covered by a patient's health insurance. This connection helps patients with their drug costs and saves time at the pharmacy. It also has helped Morris Heights provide better healthcare to their traditionally underserved clients by earning a reputation for providing quality and affordable care.

### **Conclusion**

Implementing an eRx solution helped Morris Heights achieve its primary goal of improving patient safety. In less than nine months, the technology has won over all of the clinic's doctors by delivering improved patient care, time savings for both clinicians and patients and cost containments through the insurance formulary connections. There has been a measurable attitude shift with the clinicians in regard to accepting the technology and recognizing it improved healthcare at Morris Heights. Additionally, the clinicians found the system intuitive and easy to learn.

Morris Heights went from having 10 clinicians using eRx at one location to now having more than 40 physicians accessing the system at all locations. The Morris Heights' psychiatrists are beginning to use the system and are able to see which medications their patients may be taking for other illnesses. In January 2007, Morris Heights will begin linking the eRx solution with dental staff to provide them access to their patients' medication lists.

Success with the eRx solution has helped Morris Heights gain physician buy-in, enabling them to start down the path to a complete electronic medical record. Through the use of the eRX solution, the clinics are populating the clinical database with information that will be transferred to the clinic's EMR.

The clinic's eRx solution opened the door to technology serving as a logical and familiar addition to clinician and patient interactions and the clinicians are now using care-advancing technology on desktop computers in the patient care rooms.

### **About the National ePrescribing Patient Safety Initiative**

The National ePrescribing Patient Safety Initiative (NEPSI) is a coalition of the nation's most prominent technology companies, healthcare payers and healthcare organizations dedicated to improving patient safety by providing every U.S. physician access to free electronic prescribing. The coalition is led by Allscripts, (Nasdaq: MDRX), the leading provider of clinical software, information and connectivity solutions that physicians use to improve healthcare, and by Dell, Inc. (Nasdaq: DELL), which sells more systems globally than any other computer company, placing it No. 25 on the Fortune 500.

Other sponsors of NEPSI include Aetna, one of the nation's leading diversified health care benefits companies, serving approximately 29.8 million people with information and resources to help them make better informed decisions about their health care; Cisco Systems, Inc., the worldwide leader in networking that transforms how people connect, communicate and collaborate; Fujitsu Computers of America, Inc., a leading provider of customer-focused IT and communications solutions for the global marketplace; Google, Inc., whose innovative search technologies connect millions of people around the world with information every day; Microsoft Corp., the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential; and Sprint Nextel, offering a comprehensive range of wireless and wireline communications services bringing the freedom of mobility to consumers, businesses and government users; SureScripts, the largest network provider of electronic prescribing services; WellPoint, the largest health benefits company in terms of commercial membership in the United States; and Wolters Kluwer Health, a division of Wolters Kluwer and a leading provider of information for professionals and students in medicine, nursing, allied health, pharmacy and the pharmaceutical industry.

Additionally, the NEPSI standard of offering free electronic prescribing to every physician in America is supported by a number of academic medical centers, integrated delivery networks and physician groups across the country who are leading the rollout of eRx NOW within their states or regions. For more information, visit NEPSI on the web at [www.NationaleRx.com](http://www.NationaleRx.com).