

*“Over 3 billion prescriptions are written each year and universal adoption of e-prescribing in the United States could save the health care system \$27 billion annually.”*

**The American College of Physicians**

*“More than 1.5 million Americans are injured annually by medication errors. More than 25% of these injuries are preventable.”*

**Institute of Medicine**

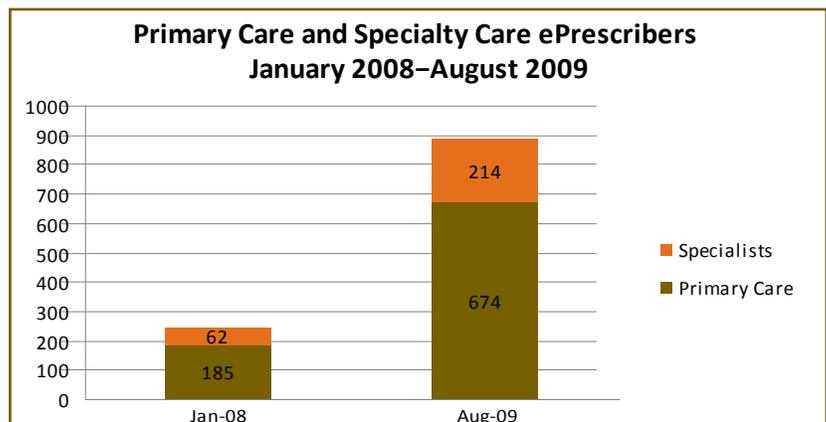
### BACKGROUND:

The New Hampshire electronic prescribing (ePrescribing) initiative began in the fall of 2006, with the goal of having all New Hampshire primary care physicians with access to the technology by the fall of 2007, and all New Hampshire specialty physicians access by the fall of 2008. As of January 2007, there were a total of 1,477 licensed primary care physicians, and 2,034 specialty care physicians in New Hampshire. Based upon informed interviews, it is estimated that more than 75% of primary care physicians already have access to basic ePrescribing capabilities through electronic medical records (EMR) systems provided by New Hampshire’s hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers, and larger physician groups. For those not using EMR systems, web-based and wireless handheld ePrescribing tools are readily available. Both Anthem Health Plans of New Hampshire and the NH Local Government Center offered handheld devices to physicians in 2007.

New Hampshire made progress in 2008 and 2009 on increasing its penetration of ePrescribing. ePrescribing involves clinical prescribers, pharmacies, health plans, government payers, and an intermediary named Surescripts which serves as the national electronic exchange of prescription information. Until recently, most EMR systems faxed the prescription to the pharmacy or printed it for the patient. Today, many of the practices have upgraded their EMRs so that not only is the prescription sent electronically to the pharmacy but refill requests are received electronically. This creates efficiencies for providers and pharmacies, as well as increases patient convenience. The final piece to these transactions is that the ePrescribing software can query prescriptions written by other providers and run edits for allergies and possible adverse drug events. This results in significant safety improvements.

As more prescribers shift from fax to electronic prescribing the numbers are expected to increase further. Additionally, Medicare is offering incentives between 2009 and 2011. After that time period, Medicare will assess penalties beginning in 2012. The majority of New Hampshire’s payers also have pay-for-performance programs that provide incentives for EMR and ePrescribing.

### STATISTICS:



During the time period January 2008 through August 2009, the total number of ePrescribers in New Hampshire grew from 247 to 888 (264%). Though primary care providers<sup>1</sup> continue to make up approximately 75% of all prescribers, the number of specialty prescribers has more than tripled.

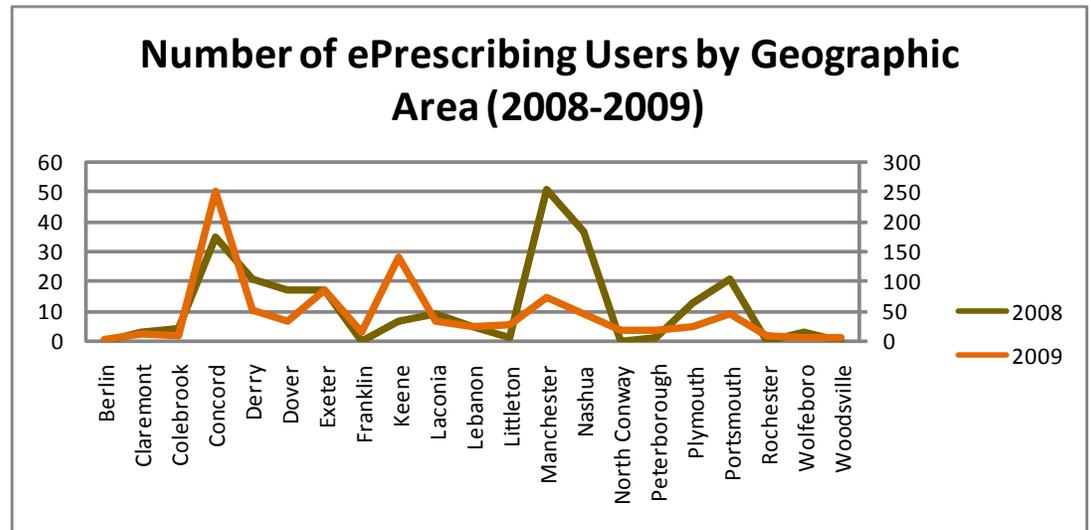
1. Primary care providers include Family and/or Internal Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Pediatrics, Nurse Practitioners, and Physician Assistants.

*“Administrative problems related to prescriptions cost \$15,700 a year for each full-time physician. Nationwide, ePrescribing could reduce up to \$8.8 billion worth of physician and staff time spent clarifying prescription orders.”*

**Medical Group Management Association**

By geographic area in 2008 and 2009, the most significant increase in adoption of ePrescribing technology has occurred in Keene, Littleton, and Peterborough. Only in Nashua has there been a decrease in the use of ePrescribing, and it has been among primary care providers.

While these statistics show signs of increased adoption, the total number of physicians participating in ePrescribing is still about 25% of all licensed physicians in New Hampshire.



YEAR	PCP COUNT	SPECIALST COUNT	TOTAL EPREScriBERS
2008	185	62	247
2009	674	214	888

**NEXT STEPS:**

The New Hampshire Citizens Health Initiative will continue to monitor on a quarterly and annual basis the ePrescribing progress. Surescripts also will continue an annual national progress report available at [www.surescripts.com](http://www.surescripts.com) that compares New Hampshire with all other states.