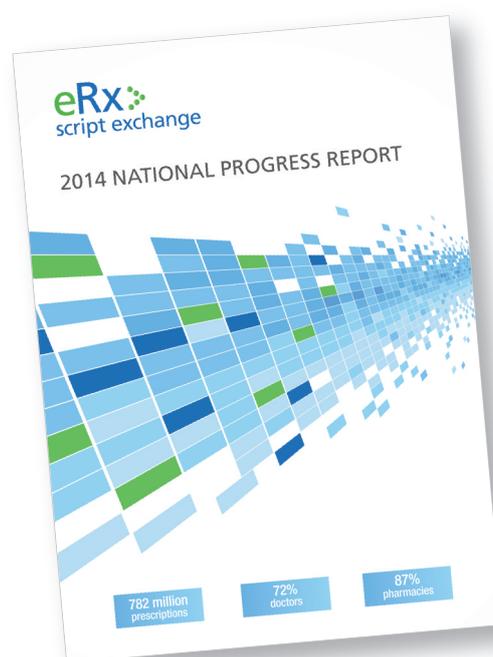# New national report highlights remarkable eHealth progress

A report published by eRx Script Exchange today shows that 80% of all prescriptions are now dispensed electronically rather than manually, which significantly improves patient safety and reduces the financial and human toll caused by mishaps with medications.

The new report documents the evolution of electronic prescriptions since eRx Script Exchange was launched in 2009, becoming Australia's first national system for the electronic transfer of prescriptions (ETP). It highlights a fundamental change in industry practice as electronic prescriptions have become standard across prescribing and dispensing, with:

- 87% of pharmacies now using eRx
- 72% of doctors sending ePrescriptions to eRx
- 80% of all community pharmacy prescriptions dispensed with the support of eRx
- 22 million ePrescriptions dispensed via eRx each month
- 782 million ePrescriptions dispensed via eRx since launch
- Patients now able to scan their scripts and submit them to their pharmacy of choice, as a result of QR codes and the eRx Express smart phone app

The most significant impact of this rollout is in increased patient safety, including in the reduction of thousands of medicine-related hospital admissions each year. One study* has found that 138,000 hospital admissions in Australia every year are a result of adverse drug events. It has been estimated that up to 18,000 die as a direct result. A Deloitte study** found that these mishaps cost the Australian health system $380 million every year.

According to Paul Naismith, pharmacist and CEO of the Fred IT Group (parent company of eRx Script Exchange), "The fact that 80% of all prescriptions in community pharmacy are now dispensed via eRx Script Exchange is extremely significant in passing on improved safety to patients around Australia. Patient safety is improved as a result of the fact that patient and medication information is provided electronically by the GP, rather than being re-typed by pharmacists."

"Electronic prescriptions provide the entire health care team with up-to-date, accurate information, which improves decision-making."

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The electronic sharing of medication information enabled by electronic prescriptions forms the backbone of eHealth, which connects health care professionals and provides opportunities for innovating in service delivery for patients.

According to Paul Naismith, "The 2014 National Progress Report highlights the remarkable success story of partnership between government, health practitioners, industry bodies, and IT behind the roll out of electronic prescriptions."

The report identifies a number of key factors underlining this success, including:

- Government leadership in linking GP and pharmacy incentives to ePrescribing as well as in supporting connectivity to PBS Online
- Advocacy and leadership by pharmacy and medical industry associations, with a key role on the part of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement (2010-2015)
- Industry-wide support from pharmacy and medical professionals
- The collaboration of pharmacy and medical IT vendors, based on a shared vision of providing universal access to deliver improved outcomes for patients and professionals

According to Paul Naismith, "This is only the beginning. Now that electronic prescriptions are part of professional practice, the health sectors will be able to continue innovating and improving outcomes for patients and professionals. The next, and perhaps most exciting chapter, will be working towards paperless prescription options.

You can download a copy of the 2014 National Progress Report at **www.erx.com.au/national-report**

Media queries: David Freemantle 03 9418 1800 / 0417 398 726

* 2010 study by Booz & Co, titled Optimising eHealth Value

** Deloitte National E Health and Information Principal Committee

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eRx Script Exchange is part of the Fred IT Group, Australia's leading provider of IT services to pharmacy. More than 3,000 pharmacies use Fred's market leading solutions, which include Fred Dispense, Fred Office and Fred Net broadband. Fred innovations such as eRx Script Exchange, Australia's first and largest national electronic prescriptions exchange, connect more than 18,900 doctors and 4,600 pharmacies to improve patient safety and dispensing efficiency.