DATA BRIEF

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DATA BRIEF FOCUS

This Data Brief focuses on e-prescribing adoption and utilization trends among physicians practicing in different practice sizes over the first three quarters of 2014.

E-PRESCRIBING ADOPTION AND UTILIZATION BY PRESCRIBER PRACTICE SIZE

BACKGROUND

Over the past six years, federal programs funded by the Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) and the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act have driven rapid increases in adoption and use of HIT among healthcare providers across the country. Nationwide adoption of e-prescribing—typically the first technology adopted by providers as they shift from paper to electronic record sharing and messaging—has increased substantially over the past decade, from <1% in 2004 to roughly 80% adoption in 2014.

Early on, policymakers acknowledged particular challenges for small and rural practice settings, many of which were already on the wrong side of the digital divide. In an effort to address the needs of those providers and the communities they serve, 62 Regional Extension Centers (RECs) were created to provide on–the-ground technical assistance aimed at adopting and using HIT resources, and particularly Electronic Health Records (EHRs). The RECs' targets were individual and small practices as well as critical care providers. Over $650 million has been allocated for the program over the past four years.

As policymakers develop a 10-year roadmap aimed at moving the US healthcare system from technology adoption to widespread sharing of health records across care settings, there has been renewed attention to ensuring that no communities are left behind. To that end, researchers have been working to identify populations of providers and patients who are behind the adoption curve so that additional resources and new solutions can be deployed effectively.

POLICY IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE

Until now, research conducted on HIT adoption among practice settings has relied almost exclusively on survey data. This Data Brief relies instead on data from the Surescripts network, the largest health information network in the nation. For this analysis we tracked actual electronic health information transactions by provider and practice to report on adoption and use by practice size. We note that our findings are not consistent with some survey-based research and we hope that sharing this unique data source will add value to the policy deliberations underway.

REPORT DESIGN AND DATA SOURCE

We used state-level data on prescribers and transactions from Surescripts, and matched this against data from Enclarity to determine adoption rates. The timeline of this report is January 2014 – September 2014.

STATE HIGHLIGHTS

Wyoming
54.9%
of e-prescribers are in smaller practices (highest among all states)

Wisconsin
63.9%
of its e-prescribers are in larger practices

Montana
+10.1%
Highest growth in smaller practices

Utah
+10.5%
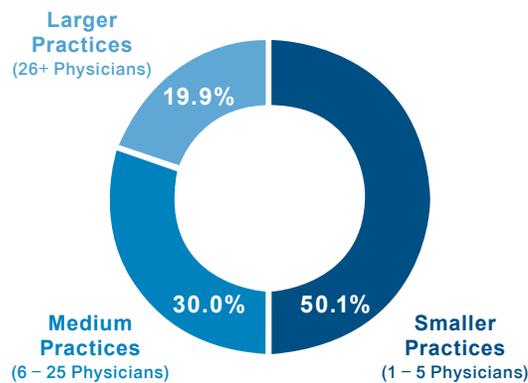Highest overall increase in adoption

4 out of 5
Office-based physicians actively e-prescribe

North Carolina
Highest overall rate of e-prescribing adoption among office-based physicians

WHERE DO E-PRESCRIBERS PRACTICE?

Larger Practices (26+ Physicians) **19.9%**

Medium Practices (6 – 25 Physicians) **30.0%**

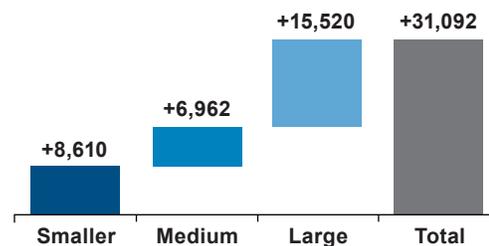**Smaller Practices** (1 – 5 Physicians) **50.1%**

- Physician adoption of e-prescribing has largely mirrored the overall makeup of office-based physicians practicing in the United States
- The majority (50.1%) of e-prescribers practice in small office settings (with fewer than 6 prescribers)
- Only 19.9% of e-prescribers currently practice in larger practice settings (defined as >26 physicians)

HOW MUCH DID ADOPTION INCREASE, AND WHERE DID THE GROWTH COME FROM?

Increase in E-Prescribing Adoption By Practice Size, Q1 – Q3, 2014

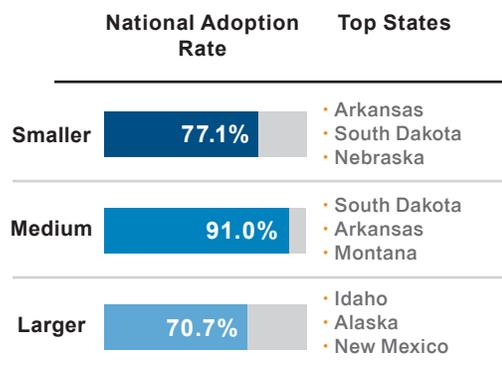| Smaller	Medium	Large	Total
+8,610	+6,962	+15,520	+31,092

- A very slight majority (50.1%) of growth in e-prescribing adoption between the first and third quarters of 2014 came from new adopters in larger clinics
- Total adoption rose 5.4%, to more than 600,000 active e-prescribers during this timeframe
  ○ An e-prescriber is counted as "active" if s/he routed at least one e-prescription over a 30 day period
- The EHR Incentive Program continues to be a key factor in increasing adoption across the country

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT RATES OF OFFICE-BASED PHYSICIAN ADOPTION BY PRACTICE SIZE?

	National Adoption Rate	Top States
Smaller	77.1%	· Arkansas · South Dakota · Nebraska
Medium	91.0%	· South Dakota · Arkansas · Montana
Larger	70.7%	· Idaho · Alaska · New Mexico

Note: Analysis represents comparison of active physician e-prescribers versus total number of office-based physicians. Surescripts used physician data from Enclarity to determine total number of ambulatory providers for this analysis

- Overall rates of office-based physician adoption of e-prescribing and EHRs continued to increase during the first three quarters of 2014, from 73% at the end of 2013 to 79.5% by Q3 2014
- Adoption has been highest in medium-sized practices, and is nearing 100% adoption; smaller practices (77.1%) have adopted at higher rates than their larger (70.7%) counterparts
- States with the highest rates of adoption in smaller practices tended to be more rural with lower population density (notably, Arkansas, South Dakota and Nebraska)
- Idaho, Alaska and New Mexico are leaders in adoption among larger practices, where adoption is close to 100%
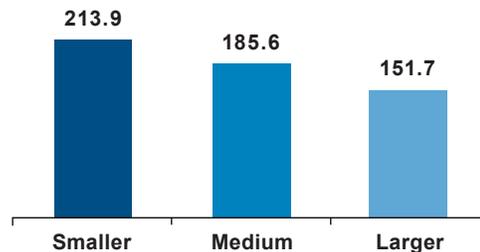
STATE HIGHLIGHTS

2 out of 3

Proportion of all new prescriptions that are routed electronically each month

100M

Average number of medication history requests nationwide during the third quarter of 2014

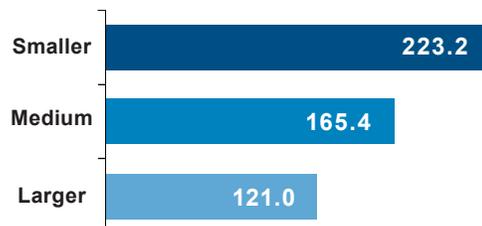## HOW FREQUENTLY DO ADOPTERS ACTUALLY UTILIZE E-PRESCRIBING EACH MONTH?

Average E-Prescriptions Per E-Prescriber Per Month

Smaller	Medium	Larger
213.9	185.6	151.7

- Utilization of e-prescribing continues to increase overall, with more than 300M e-prescriptions routed in Q3

- Small office prescribers utilize e-prescribing routing at the highest levels; this is likely due to a higher prevalence of family practitioners and general internal medicine physicians in these practices

- Prescribers working in larger practice settings route an average of 29% fewer e-prescriptions per month than their counter parts in smaller practices

ARE E-PRESCRIBERS USING THEIR APPLICATION TO REQUEST ELECTRONIC MEDICATION HISTORY?

Average Medication History Requests Per E-Prescriber Per Month

Smaller	223.2
Medium	165.4
Larger	121.0

- Prescriber utilization of the electronic medication history service very closely mirrors both the levels and trends of electronic prescription routing, with 299M total electronic medication history requests in Q3

- As with e-prescribing routing, small office prescribers utilize the electronic medication history service at the highest levels

- Smaller practices' higher utilization may be in part a reflection of higher panel size and flow through among generalists in smaller practices

WHICH STATES HAVE THE HIGHEST ADOPTION AND USE AMONG DIFFERENT PRACTICE SIZES?

	Top States	How they got there
Smaller Practices	1st ALABAMA	• Alabama has above average adoption (91.4%) and those practices' utilization of both routing (286 e-prescriptions/month) and medication history (325 requests/month) services are both among the highest
	2nd WEST VIRGINIA	• Adoption is 92.5% among West Virginia's small practices, which also have very high utilization rates, with an average of 257 e-prescriptions per month
	3rd KENTUCKY	• Kentucky has higher than average adoption (87.9%) and has the highest utilization of e-prescriptions, with an average of 327 per month
Larger Practices	1st KENTUCKY	• Kentucky has close to 100% adoption and had very high utilization of both e-prescribing (236/month) and medication history requests (173/month)
	2nd ALABAMA	• Alabama is also close to 100% adoption, with high levels of utilization of both e-prescribing (205/month) and medication history requests (138/month)
	3rd OKLAHOMA	• Oklahoma has above average adoption (82.3%), and has very high e-prescribing routing utilization (274/month)

About Surescripts

Surescripts operates the only health information network to connect the diverse and expansive community of care partners nationwide, including pharmacies, providers, benefit managers, and health information exchanges. Surescripts is leading the way for a more connected and collaborative healthcare system with a technology neutral platform that exchanges vast amounts of data across a disparate range of health technology systems in use today. For more information, go to **www.surescripts.com** and follow us at **twitter.com/surescripts**.

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