

Allscripts gives doctors access to drug data

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By Catherine Larkin

Chicago-based Allscripts Healthcare Solutions, Dell Inc. and 10 other companies on Tuesday announced a \$100 million initiative to provide free Internet-based prescribing software to every doctor in the United States.

The software alerts doctors to possible drug interactions or side effects, and transfers prescriptions electronically to a patient's pharmacy, cutting the risk of deadly errors. Americans are victim to 1.5 million errors a year in how drugs are prescribed or given, causing more than 7,000 deaths, the Institute of Medicine found in a July report.

The sponsors behind the new National ePrescribing Patient Safety Initiative say their software will give doctors in smaller practices access to real-time safety and insurance data that some can't afford at the \$1,500 retail price. Allscripts hopes that giving its technology away will entice providers to sign up for other services.

"From Allscripts' perspective, it's a great investment in our future," CEO Glen Tullman said. "The more we get physicians to enter the electronic highway of health care, the more likely they are to purchase products we provide."

The Institute of Medicine, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences that provides independent advice on health matters, has urged all of the nation's estimated 550,000 doctors to replace handwritten paper prescriptions with computerized ones by 2010.