

## **Allscripts to give doctors Rx software**

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

The software--designed to fulfill recommendations that all prescriptions be electronic by 2010-- alerts doctors to possible drug interactions or side effects and transfers prescriptions electronically to a patient's pharmacy, cutting the risk of deadly medication 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 said 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 cannot afford at the \$1,500 retail price. Allscripts hopes that giving its technology away will also entice providers to sign up for other services.

"From Allscripts' perspective, it's a great investment in our future," said Chief Executive Glen Tullman. "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, a Washington-based 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. President Bush has also called on medical providers, including doctors and hospitals, to fully adopt an electronic system for compiling patient data on medications, examinations, lab tests and billing.

The free prescribing software will be available for use via the Internet on a computer, hand-held device or wireless phone. It will include encryption and individual accounts to ensure patient privacy. The program may be operational within 30 days.