



January 06, 2010 - Topic: Patient Safety

Minnesota Rolls Out Rx Database To Help Curb Prescription Drug Abuse

This week, Minnesota launched a prescription tracking database designed to identify prescription drug abuse, the [AP/Minneapolis Star Tribune](#) reports.

The project requires pharmacies to use the Minnesota Prescription Monitoring Program to report the dispersal of addictive controlled substances.

By the end of March, the program will allow health care providers and pharmacists to access the database and identify patients who might be misusing prescribed drugs.

The program does not require health care providers to consult the database before writing or dispersing drugs. It also does not require providers to report patients they suspect of prescription drug abuse or withhold prescriptions from such patients.

Privacy Concerns

Some advocates have expressed concern that the database could infringe on patient privacy.

However, officials say the program includes several safeguards designed to protect the privacy of consumers.

The initiative only permits authorized health care providers to access the database. Law enforcement officials would need to obtain a court order or search warrant to access the registry.

In addition, health care workers could face disciplinary action for using the prescription data inappropriately.

Officials also said the program will erase prescription data after a year (Lohn, [AP/Minneapolis Star Tribune](#), 1/5).

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