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## **DEA Issues Proposed Regulations to Allow Electronic Prescriptions for Controlled Substances**

**JUN 27** -- DEA today published proposed regulations that would provide physicians and other authorized prescribers with the option of issuing electronic prescriptions for controlled substances. These regulations would also permit pharmacies to receive, dispense, and archive these electronic prescriptions. The agency is seeking public comment on the proposed regulations. Any member of the public wishing to submit comments may do so by mail or electronically on or before September 25, 2008.

These regulations provide pharmacies, hospitals, and practitioners with the ability to use modern technology for controlled substance prescriptions while maintaining the closed system of controls on controlled substances dispensing; additionally, the proposed regulations would reduce paperwork for DEA registrants who prescribe or dispense controlled substances and have the potential to reduce prescription forgery.

The proposed regulations would also have the potential to reduce the number of prescription errors caused by illegible handwriting and misunderstood oral prescriptions. Moreover, they would help both pharmacies and hospitals to integrate prescription records into other medical records more directly, which would increase efficiency, and would reduce the amount of time patients spend waiting to have their prescriptions filled. Further, with these regulations DEA seeks to ensure that patients, prescribers, and pharmacists know that the person who wrote the prescription is who that person claims to be, and that the medication being dispensed by the pharmacist and received by the patient is the medication that was prescribed.

DEA Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Office of Diversion Control, Joseph Rannazzisi, said "The publication of this proposed rule is an important step towards making electronic prescribing an option for practitioners who prescribe controlled substances. Our goal is to put in place an electronic prescribing system that is efficient, medically beneficial to patients and prescribers, and provides security from hackers and others who might seek to engage in fraudulent prescribing activities. It is also essential that electronic prescribing of controlled substances take place in a manner that allows for reliable prescribing records so that the prescribing practitioner and the pharmacist who fills the prescription can remain accountable for their actions – just as they always have been when using paper prescriptions."

"We are looking forward to receiving comments on the proposal and, after reviewing those comments, completing final regulations that will make electronic prescribing of controlled substances a reality," Rannazzisi added.