

Washington State bars handwritten scripts

June 22 2006

A Washington state law prohibits the filling of any prescription that isn't hand-printed, typed or electronically generated.

If physicians, veterinarians and other prescription writers want to assign blame for the bill, Dr. William Robertson of the Washington Poison Center is willing to accept it, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer said. He says the law will not only make pharmacists lives easier, but will prevent many drug errors.

The newspaper notes prescription legibility has been an issue across the nation, forcing pharmacists to call physicians to determine what medications should be dispensed. Some pharmacists say they often must also call physicians' offices to obtain such information as patients' names, dosage requirements and addresses.

Robertson said random samples of 6,000 prescriptions were collected across his state. When pharmacists, physician assistants and others tested the samples, they found 24 percent to 32 percent of the prescriptions were illegible, the Post-Intelligencer said.

Observers note, however, the entire flap will eventually become moot as an increasing number of physicians switch to computer-generated scrips.

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Citation: Washington State bars handwritten scripts (2006, June 22) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2006-06-washington-state-bars-handwritten-scripts.html>

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