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School of Pharmacy and Everett Clinic test computerized prescribing

Thursday, November 18, 2004

The UW **School of Pharmacy** and the Everett Clinic have been awarded a \$1 million grant by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for a three-year study to evaluate how computerized prescribing in an outpatient setting improves medication safety and patient outcomes.

According to the Institute of Medicine, medical errors cause 98,000 deaths each year in the United States. This grant is part of a \$139 million funding initiative, awarded through the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, to promote the use of health information technology as a means to reduce medical errors and improve the national health care system by making it safer and more efficient.

Computerized prescriber order-entry systems enable the prescriber to electronically "write" prescriptions that can be then autofaxed to the dispensing pharmacy.

The local project is a collaborative effort by the UW **School of Pharmacy** and its partners, the Everett Clinic; CliniTech, the Everett Clinic's health-care information technology organization; and Providence Everett Medical Center. This is one of the first times a study like this has been done in an outpatient setting. Most computerized prescribing studies have been done in large hospitals.

The team will test the efficiency and accuracy of computerized prescribing in reducing medication errors and will identify any links these errors may have to adverse drug events related to emergency department admissions. They will use interviews, focus groups and surveys to evaluate prescribers' experiences.

"This study is an important step in creating a more technologically advanced infrastructure by which the national health-care system will become more

efficient, effective and safe," said Dr. Sean D. Sullivan, professor and director **of** the Pharmaceutical Outcomes Research and Policy Program in the UW **School of Pharmacy**. He is the study's co-principal investigator.

The Everett Clinic, founded in 1924, is a locally owned and operated physician group practice with 220 physicians providing more than 40 specialty care services.

