

pharmacies take prescriptions electronically and mail the pharmaceutical drugs to the patient. The big difference is that an Internet or online pharmacy is almost always not associated with an insurer or retail pharmacy.

DRUG QUALITY AND SECURITY ACT AND LOCAL PHARMACIES

In doing research for this chapter, I contacted regional pharmacy managers for three of the top pharmacy retail chains. In all three cases, I was informed of the same response they have to the Drug Supply Chain Security Act (Title II of the Drug Quality and Security Act). These three regional managers said they would do what the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) wants, and negotiate any net add-in costs with the pharmacy benefits managers (PBMs). This means that patients will pay more—through either higher premiums or higher co-pays.

These regional pharmacy managers also said they will do everything possible to minimize the impact of this law on the local pharmacists and their assistants. This makes sense, because the beehive of activity in a pharmacy can be worrisome without the appropriate technology to simplify their activities. As I mentioned in Chapter 5, some of these pharmacies fill up to 600 prescriptions a day. All prescriptions must be properly filled, because the patient's safety is at risk with each and every prescription.

One representative from the FDA (who wished to remain anonymous) told me the FDA was not worried about compliance of the large pharmacy chains with the new law beyond the miscellaneous theft, occasional internal security incidents, and their interaction with “pill mills.” This representative said they were very worried about Internet or online pharmacies. Let's take a deep dive into the world of Internet or online pharmacies and see why the FDA is so concerned.

PHARMACY PRESCRIPTION ORDER-FILL PROCESS

The pharmacy prescription order-fill process starts with a physician authorizing a prescription to be filled for a patient. This doctor-to-patient