New Medicaid Requirements for Prescription Pads

By Steve Singer

Beginning April 1, 2008 a new law goes into effect that requires all Medicaid prescriptions to be written or printed on tamper resistant paper.

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS): "To be considered tamper resistant, a prescription must contain at least one of the following three characteristics:
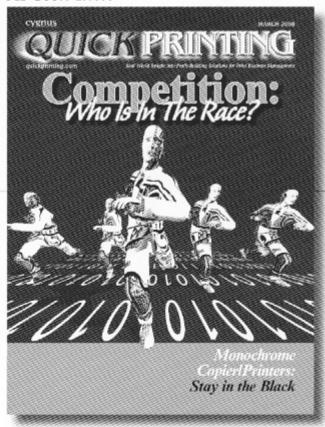
1. One or more industry-recognized features designed to prevent unauthorized copying of a completed or blank prescription form

2. One or more industry-recognized features designed to prevent the erasure or modification of information written on the prescription by the prescriber

3. One or more industry-recognized features designed to prevent the use of counterfeit prescription forms.

If prescription pads are part of your company's product offerings, now is the time to learn how the various security features work and how to validate an original prescription.

The most common and least dependable security feature is hidden message technology. The idea behind this feature is that words such as "Void," "Copy," or "Unauthorized Copy" appear when a secure document is photocopied. There are a number of patented methods to accomplish this task. However, due to changing copier and scanner technology, you may find that a prescription can be duplicated on some copiers without the hidden messages showing up on the copy. If a hidden message fails to appear, it does not mean a prescription is counterfeit. It means the pharmacist should check for additional security features.

For this reason it is very important that a secure prescription contain a number of different security features, or "Layer on Layer" security. When printing tamper resistant prescription pads, it is recommended that a "Warning Band" or "Warning Box" be printed on the document. Then the pharmacist will be able to identify other features that can be used to validate the prescription.

Other features may include:

• Anti-copy artificial watermark: Can only be viewed when held up to a light source

• Anti-copy coin rub: The word "valid" is hidden in a circle on the back of the paper and can be revealed when rubbed with a coin

• Toner bond security: Prevents toner from being removed from the paper with adhesive tape

• Premium erasure protection: If information is erased using an ink eraser, both the information and the shaded background are removed

• Production batch number protection: A unique manufacturer's product batch number may appear on the prescription

• UV security: Repeated words, such as "SECURE • SECURE • SECURE," appear when viewed under black light

• Micro line printing in signature line: A security signature line or border is created using a very small font that requires magnification to become legible

Securing a document is not an absolute science. However, through the use of "Layer on Layer" security features, it is difficult, if not impossible, to accurately duplicate a valuable document. And without question, medical prescriptions are valuable documents.

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