

COVID-19 HEIGHTENS THE NEED TO IMPROVE INTEROPERABILITY, PROVIDE PRICE TRANSPARENCY & RELIEVE PROVIDER BURNOUT

In the U.S., COVID-19 descended on a healthcare system facing some formidable challenges. Healthcare professionals were already grappling with ways to manage prescription costs, control widespread burnout, and improve interoperability among the patchwork of technologies and organizations responsible for patients' health data.

These challenges intensified as the pandemic demanded that clinicians share information more rapidly to serve a more anxious and cost-conscious patient population. Physicians and their teams took on the role of submitting COVID-19 case reports to public health agencies. For pharmacists, pharmacy-based

COVID-19 testing and vaccination efforts added to their workload and made their crucial place on the care team obvious across the nation. The demands on their time were so steep that as of May 2021, 90% of community pharmacies reported having trouble staffing open positions.¹

How have these clinicians and their patients reacted to all this change? **Surescripts commissioned a survey to explore how U.S. pharmacists, prescribers and patients are engaging with each other today—and how the past 18 months have shifted the responsibilities and challenges they face.**

KEY TAKEAWAYS

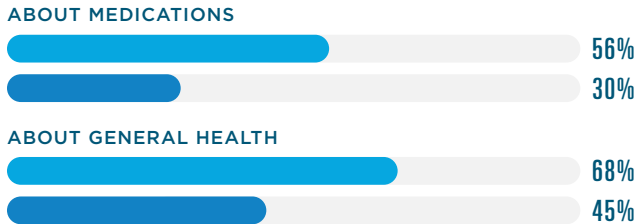
- For clinicians, the pressure is on—and it's driving the need for better interoperability.
- Prescription cost concerns spur a desire for price transparency.
- Potential for burnout persists amid rising technology use.

THE PRESSURE IS ON—AND IT'S DRIVING THE NEED FOR BETTER INTEROPERABILITY

Pharmacists said they fielded more patient questions during the past 18 months, but only 1 in 5 felt very prepared for their changing role during COVID-19.

Percent Who've Seen an Increase in Patient Questions

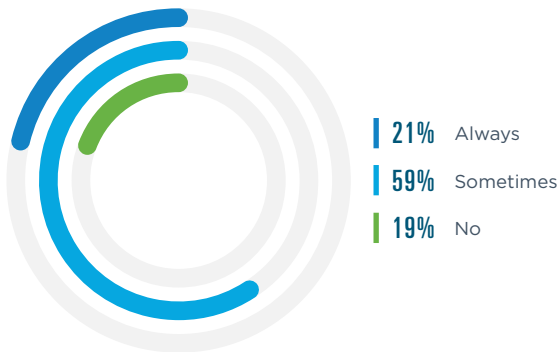
● Pharmacists
● Prescribers



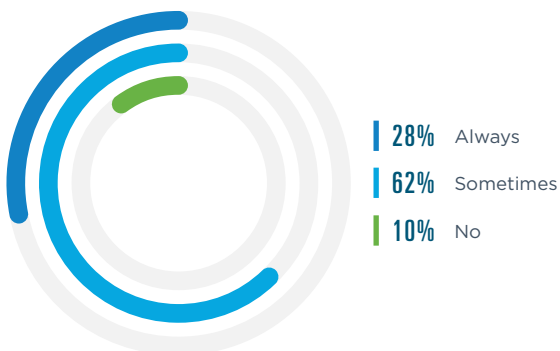
However, those pharmacists didn't always feel they had enough patient information to deliver fully informed answers—or treatment.

Do Pharmacists Have All the Patient Information They Need?

TO PROVIDE PROPER MEDICATION/THERAPY

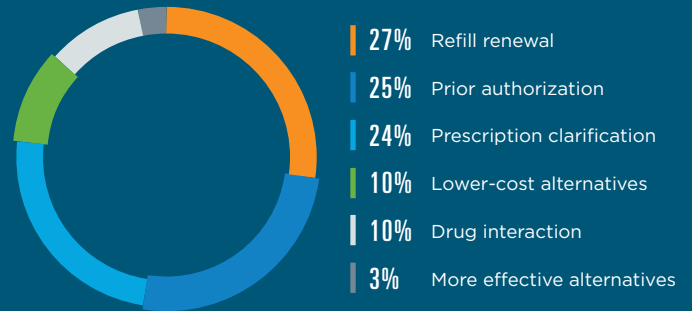


TO ANSWER QUESTIONS



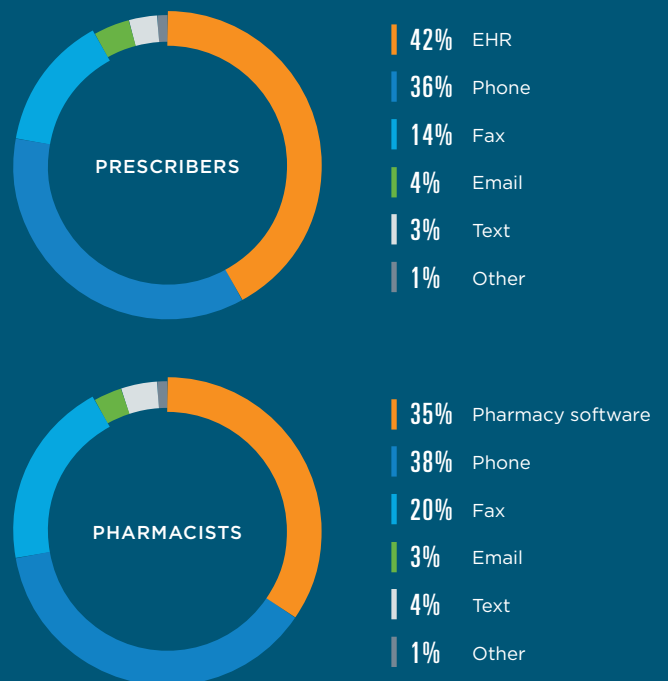
When pharmacists don't have all the information they need for a prescription or care management activities, they often turn to prescribers. On average, pharmacists estimate that **they have questions for the prescribing doctor regarding 22% of the prescriptions they fill**. Prescribers report receiving questions from pharmacists on a variety of subjects, estimating that **a quarter are about prior authorization and 10% are about lower-cost medication alternatives**.

Questions Prescribers Get from Pharmacists



These exchanges take place both within and outside of the electronic workflow. The average prescriber uses their EHR software 42% of the time, and pharmacists communicate within their pharmacy software more than a third of the time—but for both parties, a majority of communication still happens by phone or fax.

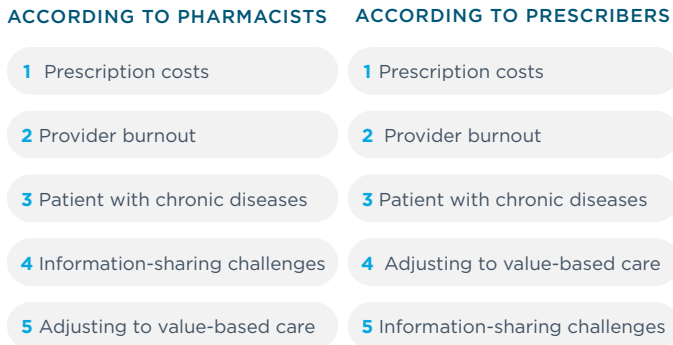
Prescriber/Pharmacist Communication by Method



PRESCRIPTION COST CONCERNS SPUR A DESIRE FOR PRICE TRANSPARENCY

Questions about prescription costs may have an even larger impact than their frequency would suggest: **82% of pharmacists and two-thirds of prescribers say the cost of prescriptions is one of the top three issues facing healthcare today.**

Biggest Issues in Healthcare Today

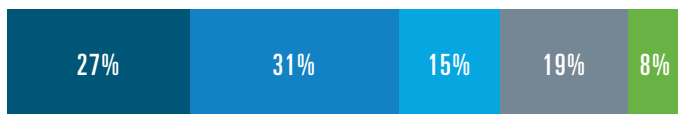


As for patients, **19% say it's become harder to afford medication in the past 18 months.** It's no surprise, then, that prescribers say an average of **25% of patients ask for a less expensive medicine**, and the average pharmacist sees **10% of patients walk away without their medications due to cost.**

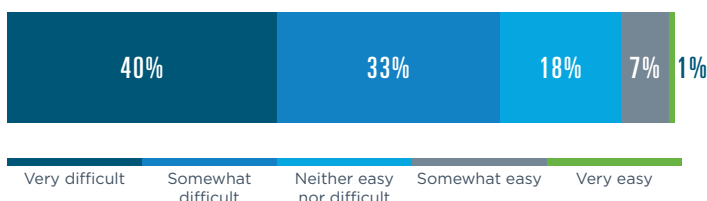
Unfortunately, prescribers and pharmacists have limited power to resolve these cost concerns: Most find it somewhat or very difficult to access a patient's out-of-pocket prescription costs.

How Hard Is It to Access Patients' Out-of-Pocket Costs?

FOR PHARMACISTS



FOR PRESCRIBERS



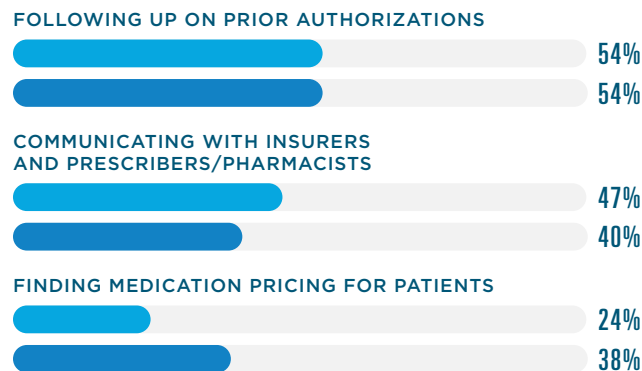
POTENTIAL FOR BURNOUT PERSISTS AMID RISING TECHNOLOGY USE

Nearly half of pharmacists (48%) and two-thirds of prescribers (66%) report an increase in technology use over the past 18 months. But there still appears to be plenty of room for technology to improve everyday workflows and frustrating processes.

Most Frustrating Tasks

% WHO SAY IT'S VERY FRUSTRATING

- For Pharmacists
- For Prescribers



That's especially true for prior authorizations: **57% of pharmacists say prior authorization requirements are increasing, and a quarter still use fax to process them.**

Time spent on these tasks adds up quickly, exacerbating staffing challenges. **During a typical work week, the average pharmacist spends as much time communicating with prescribers and insurers (5 hours) as consulting with patients, and nearly as much on prior authorization follow-up and pricing research (3 hours each).**

Top Tools That Would Make the Prescribing Process Easier

ACCORDING TO PHARMACISTS ACCORDING TO PRESCRIBERS



When patient-specific information such as prior authorization status, medication adherence and out-of-pocket costs is available electronically, prescribers and pharmacists don't have to step out of their workflows—or away from their patients—to stay on the same page and deliver the best possible care as a team. As an industry, we can help them through the pandemic and beyond with up-to-date, interoperable technologies that allow them to do more for patients with less burnout and frustration.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Surescripts partnered with PSB Insights to administer a 15-minute online survey to 520 pharmacists, 200 prescribers and 300 patients between June 25 and July 12, 2021. To qualify, pharmacists had to have practiced between 5 and 30 years and currently work full time at a pharmacy; prescribers had to work full time, write at least one prescription per day and spend more than half their time treating patients; and patients had to have filled at least one prescription in the previous six months.

1. National Community Pharmacists Association, "Tight Labor Market Squeezing Local Pharmacies, Survey Shows," June 2, 2021, <https://ncpa.org/newsroom/news-releases/2021/06/02/tight-labor-market-squeezing-local-pharmacies-survey-shows>.



Our purpose is to serve the nation with the single most trusted and capable health information network, built to increase patient safety, lower costs and ensure quality care. Since 2001, Surescripts has led the movement to turn data into actionable intelligence and convened the Surescripts Network Alliance™ to enhance prescribing, inform care decisions and advance the healthcare industry.