



spotlight on healthcare

Service Offers Personalized Drug-Safety Information

(NAPSA)—When Kurt Rauer's doctor suggested he switch heart medications—from Digoxin to Digitek—he didn't think much of it. But after about a year of taking Digitek, he received a recall warning him of a potential problem with the medication dosage.

As it turns out, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had recalled Digitek due to double the dose of medication in a single pill. Yet what's most surprising is that Rauer received the warning not from his physician or pharmacist but from an independent drug-safety service—one that supplies information on drug interactions, drug-disease interactions, safety alerts and medication recalls.

Drug statistics

In any given week, half of U.S. adults will use prescription medicines and 10 percent will take at least five different ones. In addition, prescription drug use increases with age. And more than 700,000 people make a trip to U.S. emergency rooms each year because of bad drug reactions.

One of the biggest concerns about prescription drugs is managing to inform patients in case of a recall. Less than 10 percent of all serious adverse events (a primary reason drugs are recalled) are reported through the FDA MedWatch system. Today, patients are reporting more adverse events than doctors are—another reason why patients need to take active control of their condition by staying in the know about the medications they are taking.

Getting feedback

The free service, known as iGuard.org, offers "live" updates on how medications are working by posting real-time reports of side effects as experienced by mem-



A free drug-safety monitoring service provides personalized safety and recall updates on medications and supplements.

bers. In addition, when a safety issue becomes known or a recall occurs, users get a personalized e-mail describing the new information and telling them what it means and what they should do. No other service does this.

The drug-information service launched in October 2007 and its membership is projected to grow to 1,000,000 by the end of 2008. Patients rely on the personalized information from the service to take a more active role in their own care.

- **Drug-interaction checker:** When patients register, they input all the medications they take (prescription, over-the-counter and even supplements). iGuard processes this information and flags every potential drug interaction, and then sends a personalized risk-rating alert via e-mail.

- **Portable profile:** A printable document listing all the patients' medications and supplements—to take to their doctors, keep with their travel documents, send to school/camp with the kids, etc.

To learn more, visit the Web site at www.iGuard.org.