Both health professionals and the public are concerned about medical errors. According to the Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, nearly one million serious medication errors occur in the United States annually, injuring 770,000 people and causing 6,000 deaths. The same report found that significant adverse drug events occur in 2.9-3.7% of hospital admissions, costing an average of $2000 per admission and $2 billion annually.

Medical errors involving adverse drug events (defined as serious medication errors) are due in part to illegible handwriting leading to administration of the wrong drug; overdosing due to incorrect decimal positioning; and overlooked drug interactions and/or allergies. Many studies have shown that computer physician order entry (CPOE) systems reduce medication errors. Physicians enter a prescription into the computer, reducing or even eliminating the possibility of misinterpretation. CPOEs can also identify appropriate medication substitutions, reduce costs associated with unnecessary laboratory testing and imaging, and reduce malpractice litigation resulting from medication errors. I fully support the implementation of computer physician order entry systems in hospitals.