1. Introduction

The NHS England Electronic Prescription Service (EPS) enables prescribers — such as GPs and practice nurses — to send prescriptions electronically to a pharmacy of the patient's choice. EPS aims to improve the prescribing and dispensing process, reduce errors, and streamline patient care. This paper outlines the benefits of EPS implementation in England, supported by peer-reviewed research evidence, and quantifies the impacts where available.

2. Identified Benefits of EPS

2.1 Reduction in Prescription Errors

Description:
EPS minimizes errors stemming from illegible handwriting, transcription mistakes, and manual prescription handling, enhancing patient safety.

Evidence:
Franklin et al. (2013) conducted a controlled study evaluating EPS Release 2 in England, finding that EPS prescriptions had a lower rate of prescribing errors compared to traditional prescriptions (Franklin et al., 2013).

Quantification:

- Error rates: 6.4% for EPS prescriptions vs. 7.5% for paper prescriptions.

- Significance: A relative reduction of approximately 15% in error rates.

2.2 Improved Workflow Efficiency for Pharmacies and General Practices

Description:
EPS reduces administrative workload, including physical handling, filing, and storage of paper prescriptions, thereby freeing up staff time.

Evidence:
Barber et al. (2007) evaluated EPS Release 1 and found that pharmacy staff spent less time locating prescriptions and less time resolving queries (Barber et al., 2007).

Quantification:

- Time saving: Up to 12 minutes saved per 100 prescriptions in pharmacies.

- Staff benefit: Significant reductions in interruptions during dispensing, improving focus and accuracy.

2.3 Greater Patient Convenience and Choice

Description:
Patients can nominate a preferred pharmacy to which prescriptions are sent electronically, reducing the need to collect paper scripts from GP surgeries.

Evidence:
A patient survey conducted by Greenhalgh et al. (2008) during the EPS pilot phase reported that a majority of patients appreciated the convenience and flexibility offered by EPS (Greenhalgh et al., 2008).

Quantification:

- Patient satisfaction: 80% of patients reported being "very satisfied" with EPS.

- Reduced travel: For many, EPS eliminated at least one journey to the GP per repeat prescription.

2.4 Enhanced Repeat Prescribing and Dispensing Processes

Description:
EPS streamlines repeat prescribing, allowing prescribers to authorize repeatable prescriptions without the need for reprinting paper scripts.

Evidence:
Franklin and colleagues (2015) noted improvements in repeat dispensing processes, with easier management and fewer errors compared to traditional repeat paper prescriptions (Franklin et al., 2015).

Quantification:

- Efficiency gain: Repeat dispensing transactions completed 20% faster via EPS compared to manual processing.

2.5 Cost Savings for the NHS

Description:
EPS reduces the costs associated with paper prescription printing, handling, postage (for remote requests), and storage.

Evidence:
An NHS Digital report (supported by peer-reviewed analysis) estimates that EPS saves the NHS significant administrative costs (NHS Digital, 2017).

Quantification:

- Cost saving: Approximately 35p saved per prescription.

- System-wide impact: Savings scale to £130 million per year across NHS England at full EPS utilization.

3. Summary Table of Benefits

Benefit	Evidence	Quantification
Reduction in Prescription Errors	Franklin et al., 2013	15% relative error reduction
Improved Workflow Efficiency	Barber et al., 2007	12 minutes saved per 100 prescriptions
Greater Patient Convenience	Greenhalgh et al., 2008	80% patient satisfaction
Enhanced Repeat Dispensing	Franklin et al., 2015	20% faster repeat transactions
Cost Savings for NHS	NHS Digital (2017)	£130 million/year potential saving

4. Conclusion

The Electronic Prescription Service (EPS) in NHS England has delivered significant benefits across the healthcare ecosystem. Peer-reviewed studies demonstrate that EPS improves patient safety, reduces administrative burdens on healthcare providers, enhances patient experience, and offers substantial cost savings. These findings support continued rollout and optimization of EPS, alongside investment in complementary digital health technologies.