The implementation of the iPLEDGE program for isotretinoin prescribing has been delayed by 1 month for pharmacies and by 2 months for physicians and patients, the Food and Drug Administration announced last month. By mid-October, only about 15,000 of 55,000 registered pharmacies in the United States had registered with the iPLEDGE registration system, according to Douglas Hoey, R.Ph., a senior vice president with the National Community Pharmacists Association. "I think it was an intelligent move to put implementation off," said Dr. Shalita, chair of dermatology at the State University of New York Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn.

The number of isotretinoin prescriptions dropped significantly in the year after the implementation of the SMART program. Alan Shalita, M.D., said he was somewhat relieved to learn of the program implementation delay, adding that he was not worried about being able to prescribe isotretinoin when the time came. He had registered with the iPLEDGE program soon after it came online and by November he had still not received his patient materials from the program. "I think it was an intelligent move to put implementation off," said Dr. Shalita, chair of dermatology at the State University of New York Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn.

The delay of iPLEDGE was necessary largely because not enough pharmacies had signed up yet, sources said in an interview. Implementation of the iPLEDGE program was only publicly announced by FDA in August (FAMILY PRACTICE NEWS, Sept. 15, 2005, p. 8)."We needed time to iron things out—it's a very complicated task," said a source at FDA. "We've all been having daily meetings on this for months." By mid-October, about 15,000 of 55,000 retail pharmacies in the United States had registered with Covance Inc., the company running the iPLEDGE registration system, according to Douglas Hoey, R.Ph., a senior vice president with the National Community Pharmacists Association.

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