

# Copy and Paste Run Amok—EHRs and Malpractice

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As if physicians needed another reason to be wary of electronic health records (EHRs), a new study finds that malpractice claims related to EHR use have risen in accordance with increased EHR adoption.

The study, which was conducted by The Doctors Company, a malpractice insurance company, closed nearly 100 claims between January 2007 and June 2014 in which EHRs were implicated. From 2007-2010, the organization tracked only two claims with EHR-related cases, though that number jumped to 28 claims in 2013, according to reporting by the [North Bay Business Journal](#).

“It takes four to five years from the time a claim is filed until it is resolved one way or another. The study, tracking EHR errors, saw very few claims at the beginning, the speculation being that these kinds of malpractice risks are increasing,” said Denise Moore, public relations director of The Doctors Group, in an interview with the *North Bay Business Journal*.

Most health information management (HIM) professionals would not be shocked to learn that errors caused by “copy and pasting” portions of a record into other parts of the record contributed to the malpractice lawsuits. One example cited in the report involved a small child who had recently returned from a country with a tuberculosis endemic. In the initial assessment the physician mistakenly noted “no tuberculosis exposure” and then copied and pasted that note during subsequent office visits. The child ultimately developed tuberculosis meningitis and suffered permanent and severe cognitive defects, according to the report.

The report also detailed numerous errors made via e-prescribing and dosage-related mistakes.

To avoid EHR-related malpractice, the study’s authors advised:

- Reviewing vendor contracts as vendors may “attempt to shift medical liability risk from faulty software design onto the physician”
- Resisting the temptation to override warnings and alerts
- Reconciling drug interactions of medications that multiple providers could be prescribing

The obvious advice missing from the physician centric study: consult your friendly HIM staff.

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