

EHR Guidance for Physician Practice: Keys to Ensuring a Successful Physician Practice EHR Adoption

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Today physician practices have the opportunity to improve information completeness, accuracy, and timeliness and care quality. ARRA incentives and the new regional extension centers have joined the myriad market forces accelerating the push for physicians to trade paper for health IT.

Many of us who were involved in previous health IT adoptions in acute and post-acute care institutions have the sensation of déjà vu. But this experience can help us improve the level of success in group practice technology adoption. What we learned in prior adoptions can be applied now to accelerate and improve group practice IT adoption.

Macroergonomics and Value

The REC initiative reinforces two factors that will be critical for successful EHR adoption in group practices: macroergonomics and value.

Macroergonomics is the concept that the design of effective information systems must include what is now popularly referred to as people, process, and technology. It recognizes that the technology is not an end in itself, but rather enables people to perform mission-centric processes more effectively—but only if its design and implementation prove useful and usable.

The constraint of usefulness and usability is in part derived from staff sabotage of IT adoptions. Inversely, if the technology is not useful or is difficult to use, successful adoption is materially jeopardized.

The corollary is important for physicians: if physicians find value in adopting technology, they can become technophiles with surprising alacrity. RECs that communicate and deliver value to physicians will have a higher probability of successfully enabling physicians to adopt good EHR technology.

However, many physicians' motivation for participating in RECs is improved reimbursement rather than enduring process and information management improvements. Physicians that value monetary gain and not improved health information management are candidates for disillusionment when the hard work associated with information process transformation becomes apparent.

Physician practices that recognize health IT's impact on healthcare will be better positioned to take advantage of its strengths and minimize potential drawbacks. The impact affects every facet of the industry, from altering the shape of physician practices to promoting personalized medicine. HIM professionals work at the intersection of these many changes and should be called upon to aid in physician practice transformation.

EHR Practice Guidance

The articles in this issue offer guidance and tips for physician practices transitioning to EHRs.

Today, an increasing number of physician practices are being acquired by hospitals, a trend reflecting in part the assistance small practices can gain in implementing and managing health IT. "Managing through an Acquisition" offers insights on stewarding patient data during and after an acquisition.

The release of information function is also feeling the impact of IT. Rose Dunn reviews the state of ROI in the hybrid state of electronic and paper record keeping as well as the impact of ARRA-related EHR incentive and privacy provisions.

Health IT also is advancing the potential of personalized medicine, leveraging an individual's complex genomic data. "HIM and the Path to Personalized Medicine" identifies emerging roles for HIM professionals.

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