

Spring 2012 Introduction

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by David R. Norris, MD

Given my lifelong love affair with technology, it is not surprising that during my medical residency, I enthusiastically supported the decision for the practice to start using an electronic health record (EHR). I had already been using Epocrates, Hopkins ABX, and MedCalc, and I was certain that the addition of an EHR could only improve the quality of patient care. I quickly learned that my enthusiasm placed me in the minority of my colleagues, the majority of whom were looking to EHR implementation with as much as optimism as they would a root canal or an audit.

The reviews on our facility's success were mixed (discussions of which could fill several issues of this journal), and for a time my optimism dampened. No one single factor determined our ultimate failure; it was a combination of individual, collective, and institutional factors. Despite this setback, I am a firm believer that given the potential applications of EHRs—as well as the government's meaningful use incentives—the future of medical documentation and patient management is electronic. But as a computer science professor once told me, a computer is only as smart as the person using it. The application of EHR technology to medical practices must be carefully managed and closely monitored to ensure compliance and user proficiency.

The Spring 2012 issue of *Perspectives in Health Information Management* focuses on many of the issues regarding adoption, implementation, and utilization of electronic records.

The article, “Are Physicians Likely to Adopt Emerging Mobile Technologies?” investigates the innovation factors that affect a physician's decision to adopt an emerging mobile technology device such as the smartphone.

The authors of “Hospital Characteristics Related to the Intention to Apply for Meaningful Use Incentive Payments,” discuss characteristics of both individual physicians and larger health systems that affect their decision to make use of electronic technologies in patient care.

“Identifying Patients with Hypertension: A Case for Auditing Electronic Health Record Data,” discusses the impact of EHR on the diagnosis and management of hypertension and cancer respectively.

“Commentary on The Federal Government's Role in Influencing E-prescribing Use and Research” examines the driving forces behind utilization of various electronic technologies such as e-prescribing.

“The Impact of Electronic Health Records Usage on Cancer Registry Systems in Alabama” assesses the status of EHR usage in cancer registries, the impact of EHRs on cancer registries, and benefits and challenges of EHR usage for cancer registries in Alabama.

The study presented in “Utilization of Electronic Health Record Systems by Long Term Care Facilities in Texas” examines the adoption and utilization of EHR in LTC facilities in Texas and identifies the barriers preventing the implementation of EHRs.

“Workflow and Electronic Health Records in Small Medical Practices?” analyzes the workflow and implementation of EHR systems across different functions in small physician offices.

Each of the EHR issues discussed in this issue of *Perspectives* has far-reaching implications that could affect both clinician and administrative satisfaction, income, and most importantly provision of quality care.

David R. Norris, MD, is an Assistant Professor and Director of the M3 Family Medicine Clerkship Program in the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, MS.

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