**10 Tips for Successful EMR Selection**

**Make Your Practice Efficient**

**White Paper**

**Contents**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Abstract | 3 |
| Introduction | 3 |
| Resistance Towards a Paperless Practice | 3 |
| HITECH Act | 4 |
| Why Electronic Medical Records? | 4 |
| Advantages Associated with EMR Adoption | 5 |
| How to Make Your EMR Selection a Success | 5 |
| Conclusion | 7 |
| About MTBC | 8 |
| References | 9 |

**10 Tips for Successful EMR Selection – Make**

**Your Practice Efficient**

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**Abstract**

This white paper provides guidelines to help improve EMR adoption by the healthcare industry. It strictly relates to the effective utilization of electronic medical records with regard to the HITECH Act of 2009, highlighting both the benefits it provides and the essentials to be considered while adopting an EMR.

**Introduction**

Many physicians are apprehensive about the massive expenditures associated with EMR such as costs of hardware, software, and IT support, etc., with no evident return on investment (ROI). Practices are also uneasy about the trouble that arises during the conversion process. Choosing an EMR solution is an intimidating process with so much at stake. However, by choosing the right EMR, healthcare providers can dramatically increase the efficiency and profitability of their practices while also improving the health of their patients.

**Resistance Towards a Paperless Practice**

Although the technology for EHR has been around for many years, adoption has been seemingly slow. Analysts estimate that less than one in five practices has an EMR system and the majority of that uses only the basic features. According to Dr. Martin J. Bergman, prominent rheumatologist, “physicians are needlessly resisting the inevitability of electronic medical records.”

Many physicians, especially those not comfortable with technology, are not willing to step outside their professional comfort zone to utilize the benefits of EMR. Cost is another inhibitor to EMR adoption. Physicians are concerned with high financial costs associate with EMR installation, training, space, maintenance, support and upgrades.

**HITECH Act**

President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) on February 17, 2009, which created financial incentives for physicians on the successful adoption and use of electronic medical records (EMR). ARRA also created penalties for physicians that do not adopt EMR. HITECH’s goal is not only the adoption but also “meaningful use” of EMRs, that is, their use by providers to attain significant improvements in care.

Through the HITECH Act, the federal government has allocated an exceptional amount of resources to support the adoption and use of EMR. It will make incentive payments totaling up to $27 billion over a 10 year period, or $44,000 (through Medicare) and $63,750 (through Medicaid) per clinician. This funding will offer significant support to commence adoption of EMR nationwide.

**Why Electronic Medical Records?**

Electronic medical records have the ability to drastically improve health care since they can deliver functions that paper medical records are simply not capable of, such as:

The health information of a patient is always available whenever it’s required. EMRs allow clinicians secure access to necessary information in order to maintain high quality and efficient care.

EMRs compound a patient’s complete health information in order to encourage well-informed health care decisions and more synchronized care.

EMRs support better follow-up information for patients – for example, after a clinical visit or hospital stay, instructions and information for the patient can be provided and reminders for other follow-up care can be automatically sent to the patient.

EMRs significantly improve patient and provider convenience – patients can have their prescriptions ordered and ready before they leave the provider’s office. Insurance claims can even be filed immediately from the provider’s   
  
**According to physician’s EMR...**

* improved quality of clinical decisions 82%
* helped to avoid medication errors 86%
* improved delivery of
* preventative care 85%

**Advantages of EMR Adoption**

EHR is characteristic of a fast -paced information age in which larger quantities of information necessitate a more effective database infrastructure; however there are many advantages to both the medical service provider and the consumer. Even in health check practices, with speed comes the ability to compete, particularly while managing information. A fast electronic health record system requires less time invested in trouble shooting and allows more time invested in caring for patients.

Secondly, an EMR is capable of carrying much more information than traditional systems. An EMR system can direct records from multiple offices as well as multiple types of records. Thirdly an EMR system secures records with backup files in case of emergencies, and only allows authorized users to access them.

Possibly the most appealing part of the latest EMR technology is affordability. Since EMR software uses online technology, much of the set up costs and overhead are diminished and reduced to monthly usage fees. Part of the money-saving nature of electronic health record technology is the elimination of IT infrastructure and the streamlining of multiple databases. The infrastructure is consolidated into one online database, even for multiple offices.

**How to Make Your EMR Selection a Success**

When you spend time and money on implementing EMR systems, you want to make sure that you do it properly. Choosing an EMR solution is a daunting task with so much at stake if the selection is not done properly. Selecting the right EMR vendor is as vital as choosing the right software in order to guarantee that you get the desired outcome after EMR implementation. The following tips will help you choose the right EMR software for your medical practice:

1. **Evaluate Your Needs:**

Prior to looking for an EMR vendor and confusing yourself with the services and features that they are offering, make a list of functions that you actually require your EMR to do. You could start by comparing it with the existing services you have. Being clear about your objectives and system requirements will save you a lot of time. Once you feel that your practice is ready for an EMR, develop a project plan with significant goals.

1. **Consultation:**

Before you choose EMR software, check with multiple physicians who have been using the software for some time. If you have any particular vendor in mind, verify their clients and then compare and contrast with other vendors. For long term benefits, it is advisable to get a user’s opinion for complex software such as an EMR for long term benefits.

1. **Allocate Resources:**

Allocate sufficient resources to the project you are undertaking. Develop a budget that will include the costs of hardware, software, interfaces, training, extra time and other costs related to decreased productivity during the initial weeks of implementation.

1. **Manage Your Results:**

After completing your market surveys, don’t jump to any conclusions. It is wise to get back to your staff and discuss with them prior to making any final decision. Regardless if you are a physician with a newly established medical practice or a physician who has been in business for a long time, you need to carefully examine the options.

1. **Checking the Track Record:**

Evaluate an EMR vendor by reviewing their track record, the testimonials concerning their services and success stories. This will assist you in selecting the right one based on your requirements.

1. **Select a Partner:**

You will be entering into a long-term relationship with a vendor. Changes will take place over the course of time, and you’ll have to rely on your vendor for service, assistance and support. Think of the EMR vendor as your partner rather than considering only the product and take a short interview before making up the final decision.

1. **Focus on the Model:**

At present there are two basic deployment models; client/server and web-based model. Both the approaches have their own pros and cons. The Client/server model provides faster operational speed, grants complete control over your data, no dependency on an internet server and better integration with the imaging devices. The web-based model does not focus on a server located within the business but gives access to the software through the internet. It requires a little financial investment; however it contains a pricing structure that is monthly leasing or access prices.

1. **Integration with Billing and Practice Management:**

Select an EMR system that will simplify your billing process and will not create additional work for you. The things you should focus on are provisions of electronically interchangeable billing information, displays of outstanding patient balance, insurance eligibility verification, and real-time adjudications. Check to see if the EMR vendor offers any services that will assist in your practice management.

1. **Training:**

Training is the foundation of the effective performance of an EMR system. Inquire to the vendor about the terms and conditions they are offering for training sessions: What will the training cost be? How many days will be included? Is re-training included? Are there any self-training videos? Learn about the onsite and online training manuals and demos and ask the vendor about the operating system they provide with regard to your requirements.

1. **Choose an Adaptable Technology**

Once installed, EMR software does not change until a new version comes out, resulting in the upgrade of the previous version. Therefore, you should choose the EMR software that has a flexible architecture so as to be adaptable to the constantly changing needs of your healthcare practice.

**Conclusion**

Experts have always praised EMRs for their potential to improve patient care, reduce any errors and contain costs in the American health care system. However, to achieve success with EMR software, proper planning and selection of the right and reliable vendor is necessary. By following these guidelines, understanding your needs, and comparing the services that vendors have to offer, you will ensure that your medical practice chooses the right EMR.