

EHR analytics drive improvements in physician care, patient outcomes

Modern EHR systems deliver greater functionality, drive better patient and provider experience

Recent statistics from the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) for Health IT show that more than 80 percent of all physicians are practicing with an electronic health records (EHR) system¹.

The statistic, while it seems impressive, covers up that many physicians, care team members and medical practices are frustrated by their failure to realize the full potential of outdated EHR systems.

These negative impressions derived from early experiences with EHR technology may linger, but they don't reflect the reality of powerful, analytics-driven EHR systems that are now available. These powerhouse systems help drive safer, more efficient patient care and truly achieve the potential of having all of the patient's critical health information at the physician and care team's finger tips.

ONC statistics prove the under-utilization of modern EHR technology with 56 percent of primary care physicians use only basic EHR systems. These basic systems include functionality to record clinical notes, medications, allergies and problem lists, viewing of imaging and laboratory results and prescription entry.

Even usage of the functions of basic EHR systems are often lacking – for example, the ONC says that fewer than 60 percent of these users have viewed imaging results using their EHR.

In addition, nearly 80 percent of respondents to an Association of American Physicians and Surgeons survey say that EHRs impede patient care and nearly 50 percent say that puts patients at risk².

¹ ONC Data Brief, Dawn Heisey-Grove, MPH; Vaishali Patel, Ph.D, MPH, September 2015: https://www.healthit.gov/sites/default/files/briefs/oncdatabrief28_certified_vs_basic.pdf

² Association of American Physicians and Surgeons EHR Survey: <https://aaps.wufoo.com/reports/physician-results-ehr-survey/>



Different story for new EHR systems

Much of the frustration with EHR systems expressed by healthcare providers can be traced to systems built to achieve the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) definition of Meaningful Use.

When the government began to pay incentive payments to physicians to adopt EHR systems, Meaningful Use was intended to be the way to prove that the system was actually being installed and used in the delivery of patient care.

As vendors built systems to achieve these objectives, often neglected was the role the EHR could play in allowing a whole healthcare team to improve the actual delivery of care. Users expected more than a system that just made it easier to store records in a way that was more cost-effective and took up less space.

Driven by advances in technology and user feedback, EHR systems now feature added functionality designed to make systems easier to use by physicians and other providers to deliver care more efficiently.

Advances in EHR systems also enable healthcare organizations and users to deliver higher quality care that is actually safer for patients, instead of giving physicians reasons to believe they impede safety.

The misconceptions physicians and even healthcare administrators have about the real capabilities of EHR systems continue to be shaped by early experience. Physicians who were early adopters of EHR technology or those never fully trained on the functionality are more likely to see EHR systems as only a way to collect encounter documentation and store the patient health records.

Yet, like virtually all technology now in use, the tools and functionality of EHR systems are improving at a rapid rate. EHR vendors have heard complaints from physicians and healthcare systems; therefore, continuing to design new technology that is driving the revolution in EHR usability with the promise of care delivery focused on improvements in quality, efficiency and safety.



Quality driven by evidence based care, active participation

One of the biggest ways EHR systems add value to practice operations is the capability to provide evidence based recommendations to aid physicians in making the right treatment decisions.

The medical records being a repository for information have truly gone away. Clinical decision support when it comes to prescribing medications, presenting information as to why a certain medication, procedure or test may be recommended for a patient based upon other factors in their health record, helps provide better care and improve medical decision making.

When physicians lack clinical decision support, they are becoming more frustrated and asking for EHR systems that can deliver more than just a system for data entry.

Physicians and care team members can get access to the latest evidence-based care recommendations to help guide medical decision making for a patient, whether it's primary or specialty care.

Order sets provide recommendations to providers based on best practices for things ranging from best care for a diabetic patient to appropriate preventive care for a healthy adult.

Users should expect the best EHR systems to deliver information to the care team that makes it actionable to help engage the patient to fill in gaps in the record.

Efficiency in provider workflows and patient encounters

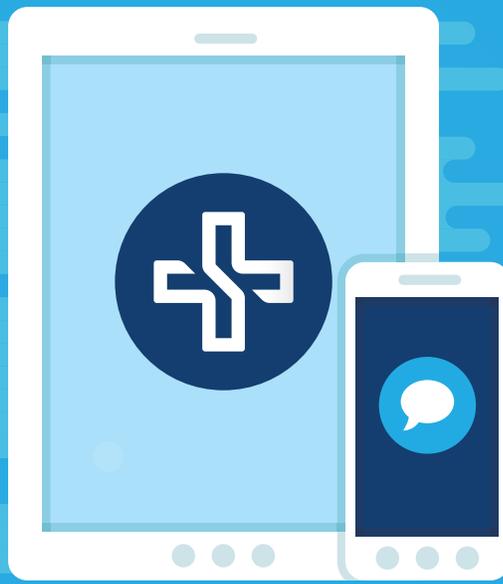
Analytics-backed EHR systems also take what was one of the biggest frustrations of physician users – that the EHR actually slows them down – and creates a positive user experience

Availability of real-time analytics – something less than 3 percent of physicians currently have, according to a recent poll in Transitioning to Value-Based Care Using Real-Time Analytics webinar hosted by Medical Group Management Association (MGMA) – is a game changer when it comes to greatly improved patient care, EHR usability and physician satisfaction.

Population Health Management is one key area where an analytics-based EHR is a difference maker. It enables the practice to identify patients with care gaps and take action at the individual patient level – without the need for the involvement of the physician. The care team can intervene with the patient before a hospitalization, from key information delivered in real time.

The care team can see from the data that there are complex issues with a patient, and the system notifies the care team to get the patient in for a visit. It helps the care team prioritize the patients that they contact with a secure message, phone call or letter.

The analytics component of the EHR system automates manual activities done by physicians and care team members, such as track Meaningful Use. It takes the burdens off of the physician and enables them to focus more intently on providing quality care.



Improved patient safety

Patient safety is improved by ensuring patient-specific information such as lab and test results are automatically ported into the patient encounters. Therefore, when the physician comes face-to-face with the patient, he or she doesn't need to go find the patient's data because it's already there.

The doctor has the data on the device he or she brings into the exam room, so things such as x-ray images can be shared with the patient right in the room. Lab results can be immediately brought up and trended to realize patterns.

Additionally, with a system that provides detailed care plans with goals, physicians and the care team can leverage the medical record to help educate and motivate patients to change. These are very powerful tools as part of motivational interviewing and shared decision making with patients.

The patient also benefits by being brought in as an active participant in his or her own care. The ability to have results available at the time of the encounter allows the physician to intervene face-to-face at the point of care, in which the patient is more likely to stay in compliance with follow-up activity.

Finally, patients or authorized family members engaged with the portal are able to view their health measures outside of office visits to see whether they are at their goals for specific conditions.



The emerging benefits

Well-designed, analytics-driven EHR systems have gone well beyond just being a mechanism to help physicians and healthcare groups achieve incentives from programs and being a way to rid the office of file cabinets full of patient records.

As with most technology, EHR vendors have adapted to frustrations with previous user experience to design seamless, patient and provider-friendly experiences that capitalize on the bold promises of electronic health records – the delivery of improved, more efficient patient-care that’s data driven and rooted in best practices for positive outcomes.

About MCIS, Inc.:

MCIS, Inc. was established from within the Marshfield Clinic Health System, and has been continuously developing an EHR for providers for over 30 years. The company understands the challenges that practices face, and empowers physicians to do what they were intended to do, which is practice medicine, with expert clinical decision support when they need it.

For more information, go to www.mcis.com.

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