

Overview

Electronic Health Records (EHR) or Electronic Medical Records (EMR) are electronic versions of patient medical history, maintained by the provider over time, and may include all of the key administrative clinical data relevant to the patients care under a particular provider. This would include demographics, progress notes, problems, medications, vital signs, past medical history, immunizations, laboratory data and radiology reports. The EHR automates access to information and has the potential to streamline the clinician's workflow. The EHR also has the ability to support other care-related activities directly or indirectly through various interfaces, including evidence-based decision support, quality management, and outcomes reporting.

EHRs are the next step in the continued progress of healthcare that can strengthen the relationship between patients and clinicians. The data, and the timeliness and availability of it, will enable providers to make better decisions and provide better care. For example, EHR can improve patient care by making the health information records readily available, reducing the duplication of tests, reducing delays in treatment, keeping patients well informed to make better decisions regarding their healthcare, and reducing potential medical errors by improving the accuracy, access and clarity of medical records.

EHR selection process

Medical practices have unique qualities and services requiring more than an off-the-shelf solutions and selecting the best EHR solution for your practice is important. To work for you, it should use technology to enhance clinical workflow and not impede it. Your EHR solution should be customizable to adapt to existing workflows rather than forcing you to change how you work. Enhancements for primary care, as well as both surgical and non-surgical specialties, should also be included because the one-size-fits-all approach is problematic and does not work. Every practice can be unique in how they provide patient services, store records, prescribe and track patient histories. Today, we are seeing significant growth in EMR technology further fueled by patient demands for better, cost-effective health care and developing Federal guidelines for EHR solutions. Before you can select a vendor, there are steps a practice needs to take.

Identify your objectives:

- Implement software solutions consistent with streamlining the operations of the practice
- Align processes and automate workflow where possible
- Ensure systems implementation is consistent with security policies for organizational IP protection
- Eliminate, reduce or streamline manual processes where possible

- Improve process efficiencies
- Links business and practice processes and workflows effectively
- Identify and communicate cost reduction opportunities
- Provide visibility to data
- Allow for distributed access to common data sources
- Integration into external systems outside the primary EHR needs to be as seamless as possible
- A flexible and adaptive software solution that can easily incorporate necessary practice or government mandated changes
- A solution that allows for growth
- CCHIT 2011 compliancy
- HIPPA compliancy
- Patient record security and privacy
- Scalability

Functionality you want:

- Automated staff work flows/tasks
- Metrics & Reporting
- Insurance certification & tracking of EOB
- Pre-certification
- External systems integration
- Insurance workflow
- Patient workflow and notification
- Inventory tracking
- Compatibility with 3rd party drug databases
- e-Prescription services
- Simplified lab orders & results processing
- Ease of scheduling calendar views
- Easy for staff to learn
- User-friendly

Questions that need to be asked and answered:

- Do I know the “need-to-haves” versus the “nice-to-haves”?
- Do I want a full implementation or instead partially integrate EMR into existing systems?
- Do all of the decision makers and stakeholders understand what EMR is?
- Is everyone on the same page regarding objectives and functionality
- Does current staff have the technical expertise to evaluate EHR solutions?
- Do they have the time to evaluate possible vendors?
- Does my staff understand our business model, process workflows and various practice processes to make informed EMR solution selection decisions?

- Do I have a staff member who can take the lead on the project and work with staff and the vendor?
- Will I be able to get technical legal review of the contract to ensure it provides what the salesperson has promised and demonstrated?
- Is this vendor solution right-sized for my practice?
- What are my implementation timelines?

The EMR model has been around for a while and has become somewhat of a moving target in terms of what

systems are available, functionality, options, integration strategies, costs, etc. Hardware and software technology is also rapidly evolving along with changes in State and Federal healthcare, insurance programs and grant assistance and incentive programs. Wading through all of the details and offerings can be a daunting and time consuming task

Made easier if the practitioner develops a greater understanding of what EMR is, can be, is not and how it can best be implemented in a medical practice. It is important to ask questions Ask! Ask! Ask! An informed consumer makes better decisions

Identify vendors

Talk to peers; research the web, contact medical associations to develop a list of vendors providing EMR solutions. Contact the vendors and request as much information on their product as possible Begin keeping detailed notes of each vendor's strengths, weaknesses, features and other relevant information.

- Objectives
- Functionality
- Referrals

To effectively rate the different vendor solutions, prepare a detailed list of questions and use it for each vendor by each interview panel member. Keep in mind while you are interviewing that you are evaluating the quality, fit, services, features, credibility, knowledge and customer service of the vendor, salesperson, their technical representative and the software. Tangibles are the specific product offerings, the implementation process, hard- and software requirements. Intangibles are how forthcoming is the vendor with information? Do they have good referrals in my practice area? Do vendor representatives appear competent, informed, and available?

Reduce the vendors to a short list for interviews

Review the list of vendors and narrow it down to a short, manageable list for interviews. The list of vendors should generally be no more than three or four. Work with the vendors to set up fixed interview dates It is best to schedule one interview per day and usually early morning before the practice gets busy To ensure everyone's full attention and fewer interruptions,

interviews should be conducted offsite. Members of your interview panel should include the key decision makers and/or operations stakeholders.

Interview evaluation criteria:

Product features and functionality:

- Product features and functionality summary
- Ability to view multiple calendars simultaneously within one location
- Ability to view multiple calendars across multiple locations
- Physician to enter data directly into EHR
- EHR data needs to be stored in a client accessible database-ability to extract data by the practice
- Staff performance metrics
- Billing export
- Billing assistance
- Billing coding
- Tracking of new patients
- Tracking of leads-patients who make inquiries but do not make appointments
- Tracking of existing patients
- PBX integration
- Workflow required and notifications
- Insurance workflow management
- Inventory tracking
- Integration with drug database
- Compatibility with third part drug database
- e-Prescription compatibility
- Accessible calendar/schedule
- Tag images with key words
- Roles-based security
- Scalability
- Multi-Practice, multi-state
- Interface with ultrasound
- CCHIT 2011 compliant
- HIPPA compliant
- Fax support
- Patient reminders
- Insurance based templates

Required states and modes:

- EHR must be accessible from a tablet, laptop and stand-alone computer without loss of functionality
- Be available 24/7/365 except for maintenance
- Fidelity interface
- Interface with Medisoft

- PACS interface
- Software internal interface requirements
- Software internal data requirements
- Network/Telecom connectivity
- Clear explanation of scalability, number of patients/total volume /large practice requirements
- Conversion requirements
- Solution should not use so many resources that user cannot use other applications concurrently
- Software works on Windows XP Professional, Vista Business or greater and Windows 7 professional or greater
- Vendor has defined training and implementation plan
- Support
- User interface
- Hardware interface
- Software interface
- Communications-mobile
- Languages

Final vendor selection

Following the interview, the panel needs to summary all interview notes and rank the vendors in order of preference based on the established evaluation criteria. There may be the need to follow-up on some points after meeting with all vendors. This may be in the form of follow-up to prior answers, clarification of features and comparison of features, service and solutions between the vendors. Remember, you are trying to identify the vendor and EMR solution that is the best fit for your practice. Don't be shy about drilling into the presentations and getting answers to your questions. The decision you make you will live with for a very long time. After you select your vendor, it's time for the contract.

Negotiate the contract

This is a critical step! This creates the fine print that controls and directly affects your costs, timelines, implementation, support, enhancements, upgrades, licensing agreements and ultimately your long-term vendor relationship. This is why clearly identifying expectations, needs and answering the important questions is so important to a successful EMR implementation. You cannot effectively contractualize an implementation without knowing exactly what you want and what the vendor promises to deliver. Technical legal review is important to close the loop between client expectations and vendor promises.

- Clearly define project members – vendor and client leads, decision makers
- Establish clear timelines
- Clearly define costs and what can increase or decrease costs
- Outline the implementation process
- Identify restrictions on licensing agreements. Both for the vendor and third party vendors

- Identify costs related to expansion within the practice, inter-state and intra-state
- Identify costs to add practitioners
- Clearly identify support hours and costs for support outside those hours and days of week

Need help?

Baecore Group can take the pain and guesswork out of selecting a qualified vendor to provide an EMR solution tailored to your specific needs. Medical practices have unique qualities and services requiring more than an off-the-shelf solution. We ensure you maximize the return on your EMR dollars with a solution that is efficient and effective for your practice.

Baecore's experienced, knowledgeable and professional staff will work closely with your physicians, IT personnel and office manager and staff. We identify vendors that appear to meet those needs, screen them for suitability to your practice and then set up interviews with Baecore Group staff and your selected medical practice personnel. We research vendors and conduct interview panels to compile a list of compatible vendors for final selection by the medical practice.

You have a practice to manage and patients to treat. Let Baecore manage your vendor and be your advocate. We work for you and your vendor, ensuring realistic timelines, minimizing disruptions, maximizing EMR benefits and developing an implementation schedule that works best for you and your practice.

Baecore eases the pain and complexity of an EMR implementation. We know the difference between the hype and the delivered product. We understand the buzzwords and help you distinguish between cost saving need-to-haves and nice-to-haves. Baecore Group not only manages the multi-process complexity of EMR soft- and hardware installs, functionality selection, contract compliance, security, data conversion and staff training, but we will assess your current business processes helping you eliminate inefficient and staff intensive redundancy and manual processes.