

Selecting the Right EHR System for Your Practice

Whether you're switching to a new EHR or implementing one for the first time, this guide will help ensure you're asking the right questions when making this important choice.



The key to selecting the right EHR system for your practice is to evaluate the health IT vendor and the EHR system itself to determine whether they will support your practice and patients both now and in the future.

Selecting and implementing an EHR in your practice is all too often treated like buying a car: a list of features, some bewildering package options, a staggering sticker price, and after exhausting negotiations, additional fees for things that should have been there all along. Sign, drive off the lot, and bring it back for routine maintenance and recalls. And just like a car, EHR systems selected using this method will never be more than the product it was the day you bought it.

But an EHR *should* be different. Your practice changes and grows, technology improves at an incredible pace, and regulation complexity seems to increase daily. EHRs that require massive efforts to update, that require you to take on risk of failure and delays, are static systems that will hold your practice back, and ultimately fail you. EHR vendors who struggle to keep pace with the rate of change, whether because of their own technology decisions or their priorities, will eventually come up short when it matters most to you.

Purchasing and implementing an EHR is as much about today as it is about the future of your practice. Whether you're switching to a new EHR or are implementing one for the first time, it can be a daunting selection.

Review the questions on the pages that follow to ensure that you are considering all of the important factors when evaluating your EHR system options.

1. Does this EHR meet my current and future needs?

The healthcare industry is constantly changing, and along with it will come changes to your practice's priorities and your patients' needs. Because of this, is it important to select an EHR system that meets your current needs but also one that has an established model for improving the product in response to industry changes and customer requests - without requiring additional investment from you.

Questions to ask the vendor:

- Is the system easy and intuitive to use by all members of an interdisciplinary ambulatory practice setting?
- Does the EHR system integrate with other products, such as practice management software, lab and radiology centers, and public health registries?
- How do you gather feedback from customers for new features and product enhancements?
- How often are new features released?
- Are customers required to pay additional fees or manually implement upgrades to the system to access new features?

2. What kind of support will I receive from this health IT vendor?

Even with a EHR system that's easy to use, knowledgeable and available customer service and on-demand educational resources are key to ensuring that you and your staff get the most out of your EHR. But true customer service support doesn't end after you've implemented the system and are actively using the product - it is with you every step of the way as you see patients, onboard new practice staff, and begin participating in value-based reimbursement programs such as MIPS.

Questions to ask the vendor:

- What support will I receive during and after implementation?
- Is your support unlimited?
- Do I have to pay extra to get support for programs like MIPS and Meaningful Use?
- Do you offer support from live people?
- Do you offer on-demand support that can be accessed 24/7?

3. Is this EHR certified?

To qualify for positive payment adjustments or to even participate in certain programs administered by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and potentially other payers, you must use an EHR that is certified, at minimum, to the 2014 Edition EHR certification standard. Beginning in 2019, you will need to use an EHR system that meets the 2015 Edition EHR Certification standard to participate in federal value-based reimbursement programs. Using a certified EHR system has benefits even for providers not participating in these programs in areas such as interoperability and quality measurement.

Questions to ask the vendor:

- Is this EHR system certified by the ONC? If so, to what standard (2014 Edition or 2015 Edition)?
- Will this EHR system fully meet 2015 Edition requirements by January 1, 2019?
- What federal value-based reimbursement programs can I participate in with this EHR?
- Is this EHR certified by other third-party organizations like the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA)?

4. What do my peers have to say about using this EHR system?

The best way to find out what existing users think of an EHR is check out publicly published rankings and other surveys that evaluate EHR systems and customer satisfaction. If possible, speak with EHR users of the system in your area or request customer testimonials from other healthcare providers in your specialty or area of practice.

Questions to ask the vendor:

- How can I evaluate the satisfaction of your current customers?
- Has this EHR system achieved any awards that represent customer or user satisfaction?
- Can I read about or listen to any customer testimonials about this EHR system?

5. Is the EHR system affordable?

Some EHRs have a high initial sticker price. Others may cost less up front but require a hefty fee to maintain or upgrade certain features, such as e-prescribing. Others may be offered at a low cost, but don't have all the features or support you need or they will take a percentage of your practice revenues in exchange for the "low cost" EHR system.

The costs associated with maintaining an EHR system are not going down, so make sure you know all the current and projected costs of your EHR down the road. If your EHR costs are constantly rising, and the incremental costs of operating your system aren't what the vendor told you they would be, you can find a better solution that meets your needs while still being affordable

Questions to ask the vendor:

- What is the price for the system and what is the payment model?
- Do I have to pay for every staff member to access the system?
- Will I have to pay more every time the system is upgraded?

- Is there a fee for interfacing with labs or imaging centers?
- Will I have to upgrade my existing hardware?
- Is there an added cost to use features such as electronic prescribing for controlled substances (EPCS), batch Continuity of Care Document (CCD) export, or the integrated patient portal?

Once you have the information you need, it's time to decide on the EHR system that will serve your practice best.

As mentioned at the beginning of this guide, an EHR system should be different. Your practice changes and grows, technology improves at an incredible pace, and regulation complexity seems to increase daily. EHRs that require massive efforts to update, that require you to take on risk of failure and delays, are static systems that will hold your practice back, and ultimately fail you. EHR vendors who struggle to keep pace with the rate of change, whether because of their own technology decisions or their priorities, will eventually come up short when it matters most to you.

Practice Fusion is different. Practice Fusion is more than just a list of features, because we're adding new features all the time, right into your EHR. It isn't a complex array of prices and options, but rather a single, simple, transparent price, because we feel you shouldn't have to worry about getting what you need or paying for things you don't. Practice Fusion isn't software that you have to upgrade every couple of years, and hope everything goes right, or a system that you can only access when you're at work or with special software; it's a service that you can access from anywhere in the world, at any time, and that is subtly, constantly improving right in front of you. We are the platform that you build your practice on, a partner that grows with you, supports you, understands you and your business. We simplify the shifting sea of regulation for you, so that you can focus on caring for your patients. We make sure that the best improvements in technology are immediately available to you, in features, in performance, in efficiency, and in security.

We look forward to serving as your trusted health IT partner now, in the future, and for many years to come.

ABOUT PRACTICE FUSION

Practice Fusion, an Allscripts company, is the leading Web-based electronic health record (EHR) platform for small and independent physician practices in the U.S., with a mission of connecting doctors, patients, and data to drive better health and save lives. By facilitating over five million patient visits a month with more than 600 connected partners, Practice Fusion helps coordinate care within the largest healthcare ecosystem in the U.S. As the most widely used cloud-based ambulatory EHR, Practice Fusion is helping to reshape the future of healthcare. For more information, visit www.practicefusion.com.



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