

EHR Implementation Considerations

**A closer look at barriers medical practices face when
implementing an EHR**

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Introduction

In this whitepaper, we'll examine the challenges that small medical practices often face in transitioning from paper charts to EHR systems. With 90% of doctors in the US still using paper [today](#), there are obviously technology and workflow hurdles often faced in the sector. We will also review tips and resources available to help make the adoption process smoother in your own office.

Challenges Practices Face in Setting Up EHRs

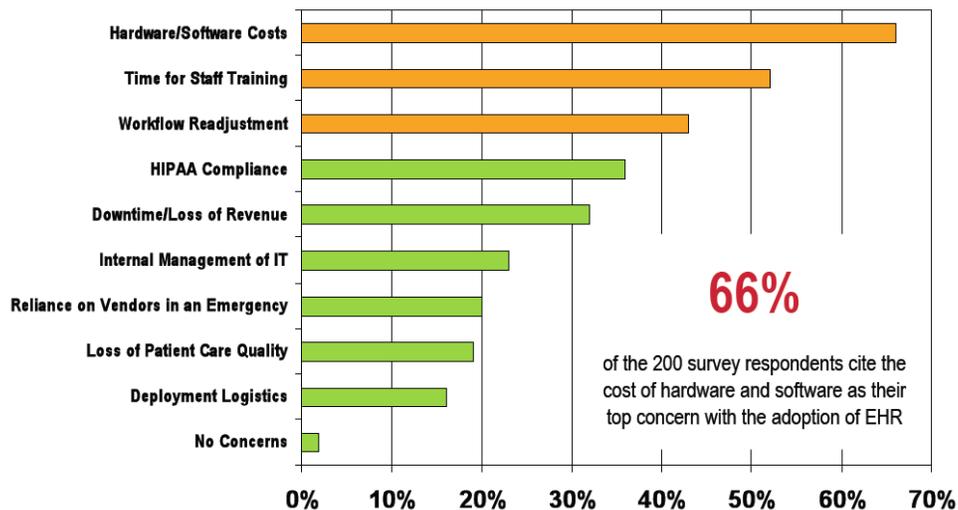
Doctors across the country are faced with the challenge of transitioning their practice from paper to Electronic Health Records as part of the government's push for healthcare to go to digital. Easy feat? Hardly. Due to concerns over cost, time spent implementing and workflow changes, only 10 percent of US doctors are on a fully functional EHR today – a full decade after this technology has been made available to the healthcare sector.

Historically, legacy EHR vendors have been prohibitively expensive for most private practice doctors. A 2005 Health Affairs Journal report estimated the average cost of an EHR system to be \$44,000 the first year and \$8,500 each additional year per physician. In addition, those client-server-based systems required weeks of installation and training, cutting time away from patients and the practice's revenue.

In a CDW Healthcare study titled "Physician Practice EHR Price Tag", 200 physician group practices not using an EHR were surveyed regarding their thoughts and plans around adoption. The first question focused on their main concerns.

What, if any, are your primary concerns regarding EHR adoption?

(Choose the top three)



The top three concerns are the same for practices with three or fewer physicians.

As the graph shows, physicians' top three concerns regarding EHR adoption are hardware/software costs, time for staff training and workflow readjustment. With the EHR marketplace historically cluttered with expensive, client-server models requiring long implementation roadmaps, American doctors seem to have been wise to have avoided adoption in the past.

Why Practice Fusion is Different

Practice Fusion was developed specifically to address the concerns preventing doctors from adopting an EHR. By making our product 100 percent free through our ad-supported business model, we eliminated initial cost barriers. Because our EHR is web-based, we do not require any expensive hardware installation on site, which represents another significant cost reduction. Our free price tag stands out against [competitors](#) charging of tens of thousands of dollars. We also have a "live in five" promise that guarantees a doctor can sign up for a new account and be charting in under five minutes, as opposed to the 3-6 months our competitors take to install their EHR on site.

The hardware requirements for using Practice Fusion's EHR are remarkably simple. Often our support team will tell doctors that if they can watch a YouTube video on their computer, they're ready to use Practice Fusion. Most of our competitors are client-server models that require the practice to set up massive pieces of hardware in their practice. Our web-based design also allows us to provide a [Service](#) Level Agreement of 99.9 percent uptime – something that client-server models cannot provide a Service Level Agreement because uptime is only as good as the state of the server.

The most important requirement for running Practice Fusion is a broadband connection with a minimum speed of 256k (0.25Mb) upload and download. Our EHR is entirely run on Adobe Flash so practices will need to have the latest edition on the computer, which is a free upgrade on Adobe's website that only takes a minute to install. Below is a list of more specific hardware requirements for running Practice Fusion:

Hardware	Minimum	Recommended
Processor	2GHz	2.5GHz
Screen resolution	1024 x 768	1600 x 1200
RAM	1GB	2GB

The Impact of Adoption Speed

While Practice Fusion addresses the top concern through our free, web-based model, we also address an important underlying concern of loss of revenue during an adoption year. The CDW survey found that 32 percent of respondents cited loss of revenue as a primary concern. However, all respondents expected to experience a 10 percent loss of productivity while reworking an average of 44 percent of their patient encounter workflow.

When the survey dug deeper, it revealed that in an EHR adoption year, physician practices may lose as much as \$101,250 in revenue because of workflow disruptions. On the bright side, once an EHR is fully implemented, patient workflow efficiencies could deliver as much as \$151,875 in additional [revenue](#).

How Consultants Can Help

Adoption speed has a significant impact on avoiding productivity losses and regaining revenue. While Practice Fusion's free and unlimited remote support and training works for many of our users, we do realize there are some practices that require onsite help implementing their EHR. For example, some practices are not accustomed to using computers in their daily workflow and need additional IT assistance. Other practices are large and want onsite help to coordinate the EHR transition among multiple practice members.

Whatever the circumstance may be, help from a consultant within office is sometimes needed for a speedy EHR adoption. That is why we created a national [Certified Consultant Network](#) of independent professional service providers and technology consulting firms to help implement Practice Fusion's EHR in local practices. Our Certified Consultants are able to deliver affordable onsite help implementing the EHR and can help with the following:

- Training each member of the practice
- Selecting and installing hardware
- Maximizing internet speed and reliability
- Integrating other systems
- Customizing EHR templates
- Providing ongoing support and training

Practical Tips for Setting Up Practice Fusion in Your Office

For physicians looking to implement Practice Fusion's EHR, it is important to assess the office's hardware and the staff's needs to develop a timeline for adoption. The following questions provide an initial guide for choosing our in-house training and support, an on-site Certified Consultant or a mixture of both.

- Is the practice currently using an EHR?
 - o If transitioning from another EHR, our support team can help import your patient demographics. You will need to talk with your current EHR vendor to discuss how to obtain your patient charts.
 - o If transitioning from paper, there are various options for your charts. Some practices keep all their paper charts in storage while others scan their charts into the EHR as documents. The majority of practices do a combination of these two options by scanning in only the most important patient information in a chronological format based on the patient's next appointment.
- How comfortable with technology is each member of the practice?
 - o If comfortable with computers, our web and phone support is more than enough to train on the EHR.
 - o If uncomfortable or have little experience with computers, a Certified Consultant can provide onsite guidance and additional IT support.
- How soon is the practice planning on going live with the EHR?
 - o Practices should utilize the Practice Fusion [Quickstart Guide](#) to create a roadmap to meet their goal.
 - o If the practice wants additional help streamlining this process, a Certified Consultant can assess the practice's readiness and help meet their goals on time.
- Does the practice need e-prescribing?
 - o If yes, become activated by downloading the fax form from the e-Scripts section in the EHR then fax it directly to Practice [Fusion](#).
- Does the practice want to integrate with Practice Fusion's lab partners?
 - o If yes, sign up from the Labs section in the [EHR](#).

Conclusion

There are many considerations for physician practices planning to adopt an EHR, both initially and ongoing. While practices generally focus on the cost of software and implementation, the more significant cost can be the rate of adoption speed slowing down the practice's workflow. In an adoption year with a badly-matched EHR system, physician practices may lose just over \$100k in patient revenue due to workflow disruptions. However, even with a difficult system, once the EHR is fully implemented patient workflow efficiencies could deliver as much as \$150k in additional annual revenue. Quick adoption is critical to successful and financially sound EHR adoption.

Practice Fusion addresses both initial and ongoing challenges physicians face in EHR adoption through a variety of resources. By making our EHR free and web-based, we eliminate initial cost barriers. By providing various options for training and support, including in-house phone and web support as well as onsite Certified Consultants, we allow the practices to choose a solution that fits their needs. Given how valuable increasing adoption speed is for a practice, our EHR has been developed to offer proven ways for a faster adoption. Practice Fusion is here to support physician practices on the path to successful EHR adoption.

Bibliography:

CDW Healthcare Physician Practice EHR Price Tag. 13 Dec. 2010. CDW.
<http://newsroom.cdwg.com/features/feature-12-13-10.html>