



Healthcare Data Solutions

2014 Survey of U.S. Physicians:

What Physicians Want From Their EHRs

Introduction

Physician satisfaction with electronic health records is at a tipping point.

While there is a strong trend toward the adoption of EHRs – approximately 72 percent of healthcare providers are currently using them – numerous studies show that the majority of Physicians are dissatisfied.

One such study by RAND and the American Medical Association showed that the overwhelming majority of Physician respondents feel that EHRs have decreased their professional satisfaction in multiple ways. A similar study by MPI Group and Medical Economics revealed that 70 percent of Physician respondents feel that EHRs “have not been worth it.”

With access to over 1 million Physicians nationwide, Healthcare Data Solutions (HDS) conducted its own survey of Physician satisfaction with EHRs. What we discovered simultaneously supports

previous studies and also points to tremendous opportunities for EHR vendors.

Cumulatively, these findings come at a crucial time: Amid the struggles of meeting Stage 2 Meaningful Use requirements, hospitals and Physicians are reportedly in a “buying frenzy” for new EHRs that are capable of advanced functionality, such as intelligent interoperability, as well as the ability to support the goal of improving the health outcomes of entire populations.

As this whitepaper will show, there are numerous areas that need improvements, from design to functionality to customer support.

In an industry that has seen a major boom in growth since the HITECH ACT of 2009, the vendors that rise to the challenge of satisfying the unmet needs presented in this whitepaper may just be the ones that survive.

Background

Physicians participating in CMS' Meaningful Use program have a vested interest in adopting EHRs and demonstrating advanced abilities in using them: Meeting Meaningful Use criteria can translate into financial reimbursements up to \$44,000 for Medicare claims and up to \$63,750 for Medicaid claims. Conversely, failure to meet Meaningful Use requirements can also be costly, resulting in a reduction of Medicaid and Medicare claims by one percent for every year, starting in 2015.

The current state for participating providers using EHRs is tenuous. A government study by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) revealed that only one in eight Physicians has an EHR system that can support Stage 2 requirements.

To qualify for Stage 2 Meaningful Use requirements, participating providers must meet all 17 criteria, including the ability to transmit prescriptions electronically, generate clinical summaries for patients and submit electronic data to immunization registries, to qualify for reimbursements.

Given their current EHR struggles, as well as the imminent challenge of meeting Stage 3 Meaningful Use criteria, Physician perspectives on EHRs have predominantly been pessimistic.

While Physicians believe in the concept of EHRs as a tool to help improve the quality of care in the future, in practice, EHRs have actually lessened Physician professional satisfaction in a multitude of ways.

Healthcare Data Solutions' survey of over 1 million Physicians aimed to uncover the reasons behind Physician satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with EHRs.

Key Findings

The #1 reason Physicians chose their current EHR or would consider switching EHRs is usability. Conversely, improving usability is also one of the top areas where Physicians would like to see improvements.

Physician perspectives on EHRs are influenced by a blend of practical and clinical concerns. As shown in Figure 1, a user-friendly EHR system that meets Meaningful Use requirements and improves patient care were the top reasons why Physicians chose their current EHR systems – and why they would consider switching EHRs.

While many Physician respondents said they are satisfied with their EHRs (37 percent), our survey also found that a large number of Physicians are neutral, with 34.4 percent being “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.”

Most Physician respondents (51 percent) reported having just one EHR in the last three years, while 27.3 percent have had two. This diverges from the MPI Group/Medical Economics study, which found that 73 percent of Physicians in large practices would not purchase the same EHR again. However, the high rate of neutral Physician satisfaction in our survey does indicate a high probability that they would switch vendors.

FIGURE 1. Why Physicians chose their current EHR system or why they would consider switching EHRs

Is user-friendly	28.1%
Improves quality of patient care	25.0%
Meets Meaningful Use requirements	21.9%
Provides adequate training	6.3%
Is inexpensive	6.3%
Clinical interoperability capability	6.3%
Other	6.3%

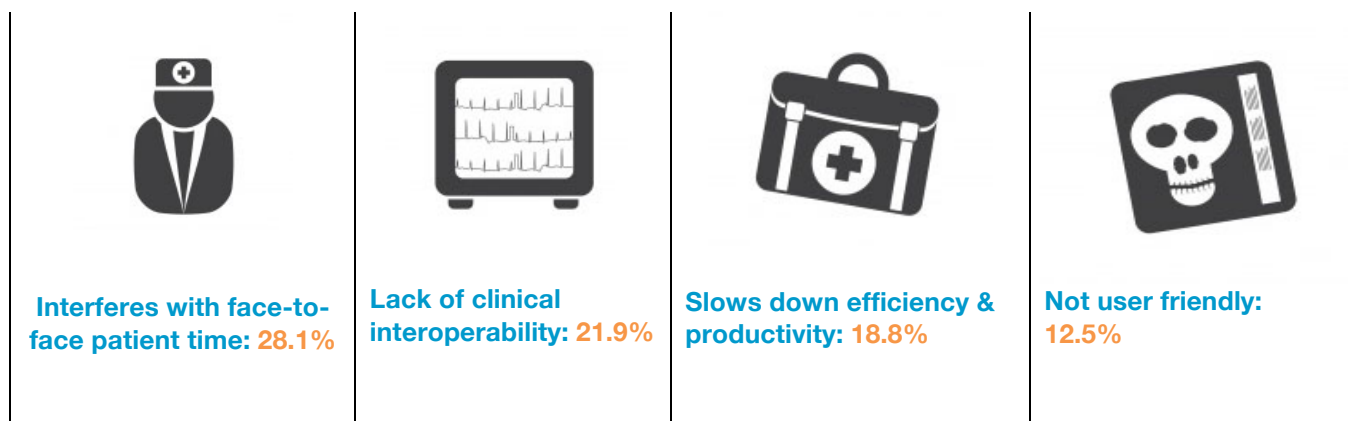
The majority of Physicians surveyed are dissatisfied with the way EHRs interfere with face-to-face patient time. This aligns with a 2013 Deloitte study, which found that Physicians are spending about 26 percent less time with patients.

The lack of EHR interoperability is another major complaint. The ability to communicate electronically with other providers and medical institutions is critical to Meaningful Use, and will become increasingly important as healthcare organizations and Physicians move toward Stage 3 requirements. Not only will EHRs need to demonstrate true clinical interoperability, but they will also be relied upon to improve the health outcomes of entire populations.

Losses in efficiency and productivity are additional Physician complaints worth vendor consideration. As millions more Americans gain access to healthcare, the urgency for tools that streamline processes and maximize workloads will become a major influence on Physician and hospital decision-making.

Usability is also important in terms of quality of care, efficiency and productivity. While only 12.5 percent of Physician respondents listed user-friendliness as their top complaint, when weighed against the percentage (28 percent) of Physicians that chose usability as the top reason for selecting their EHR against this number, we see that nearly half of Physicians are dissatisfied with this aspect of their EHR.

FIGURE 2. What Physicians dislike most about their current EHRs



Customer Service: The Competitive Advantage

Product and service developers often overlook the value of customer service. Mistakenly regarded as a “nice to have” rather than a “must have,” customer service remains one of the most untapped value-added benefits in the world of healthcare IT.

More often than not, providing exceptional customer service is the one differentiator between businesses that thrive in the long term and those that rise quickly but fall just as fast.

For EHRs today, satisfying functional requirements is no longer enough to survive the dynamic healthcare landscape; EHRs must be able to deliver best-in-class capabilities as well as best-in-class customer service.

When treated as the competitive advantage it is, great customer service offers a multitude of benefits: it keeps customers happy, it determines a company's longevity, and it's good PR – something EHRs could use amid years of industry backlash.

Although telephone support is an important aspect of customer service, great customer service is much more than that – especially when dealing with complicated technologies and various levels of technological aptitudes. In-house trainings, online webinars, videos and knowledge bases, in addition to 24-hour telephone support, are all ways that EHRs can elevate their services and strengthen relationships with customers.

FIGURE 3. Customer Service Offerings of Top-Ranked EHRs

EHR VENDOR	CLIENT TRAINING	ONLINE LEARNING (Videos, webinars)	RESOURCE LIBRARY (Articles, reports)	OTHER
AllScripts	X	X	X	24/7 Client Portal Online Client Community
AmazingCharts.com	X	X	X	Online Chat, Online Community User Conferences
AthenaHealth	X	X	X	Apps
Cerner	X	X	X	Client Training Community
CPSI	X		X	365 Support
eClinicalWorks		X	X	Customer Portal
GE Healthcare	X	X	X	Service Portal
Greenway Medical Technologies	X	X	X	Online Client Community
Epic	X	X	X	Community Library
HCS			X	24/7 Tech Support
Healthcare Management Systems				
Healthland	X	X	X	Central Station Online Client Community
Next Gen	X	X	X	Live Chat
PracticeFusion	X	X	X	Customer Portal
Prognosis	X	X	X	24/7/365 Full-Measure Support
Razor Insights	X		X	Marketing Toolkits
Siemens Medical	X	X	X	

With so much focus on sales, most EHRs have ignored the value of customer service and support to their detriment.

EHR vendors can help Physicians overcome the obstacles of modern medicine – and technologies – by viewing their role as Physician supporters and partners, not just vendors. This means providing a level of service that does not create additional or excessive burden on Physicians nor distracts them from delivering quality patient care.

In addition to the traditional customer service offerings mentioned above, EHRs can go the extra mile in customer support by involving Physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals in the development and upgrades of EHRs; providing better training; and focusing on relationships just as much as ROI.

Getting Physicians Involved – The focus on meeting Meaningful Use requirements has dominated EHR development, leaving usability to take a back seat. But Physicians clearly know what works and doesn't work for them and want to be involved: [20 percent of our survey respondents listed involving Physicians in EHR development as important and 30 percent of Physicians responded that they wanted EHRs to be more user-friendly.](#)

Here, Physicians have a real opportunity to identify their needs and define their expectations, and EHR vendors have a chance to seize that opportunity to develop products that meet expectations, requirements and standards.

Recognizing that every practice is different, EHR vendors can conduct focus groups or more formalized meetings to map out together the workflow processes of Physicians, nurses, and other staff to ensure that all critical processes remain intact.

Regularly surveying Physicians, nurses and other EHR users for feedback and using that feedback to plan enhancements and improvements can also help improve Physician satisfaction in areas such as efficiency and patient interaction.

Providing Better Training – A customized, innovative training program can increase Physician productivity and build brand loyalty. Physicians may not realize the importance of training from the outset, but EHR vendors have an intimate understanding of their application complexities and should champion the importance of training.

Offering tailored training programs that can be applied incrementally is crucial, considering the busy schedules of Physicians, varying levels of computer aptitude, and limited budgets of practices and hospitals.

Additionally, training programs should not be limited to teaching the nuts-and-bolts of screen navigation; they should be designed with the purpose of supporting Physicians – and nurses – in patient care and clinical decision-making.

Soliciting feedback from Physicians and nurses can improve the quality and outcome of training, and should be used to make improvements. Lastly, EHRs that don't have the capacity to provide robust training programs should consider partnering with local training centers to ensure that customers have flexible, cost-effective training options.

Conclusion

When evaluating Physician perspectives on EHRs, the tendency has been to focus on improvements in functionality. To be sure, functional issues of usability, interface design, and interoperability are undoubtedly core to Physician satisfaction, and EHR vendors need to meet those needs. Ultimately, however, the Physician's primary goal is to find efficient ways to improve patient health and streamline workflow processes.

How EHR vendors can help Physicians achieve that goal is not as simple as providing a platform that performs certain functions. EHRs must think beyond the Physician-vendor relationship, transforming their role to that of partner and supporter in the public health landscape. Customer service and support is one area that has been overlooked and underserved – and where EHRs have a tremendous opportunity to assert this position. But time is of the essence: According to recent KLAS data, one-third to half of all large hospitals are looking to switch EHRs by 2016.

To learn what EHR vendors physician practices are using, and how to get the most accurate data needed for clinical interoperability, contact Healthcare Data Solutions at 1-877-472-9066.

