EHRs AND HEALTHCARE TECHNOLOGY: WHAT’S IN IT FOR ME?

Greenway customers explain.
Many physicians, especially those in smaller practices or who've practiced medicine longer, feel that electronic health record (EHR) systems aren't worth the $27 billion the federal government has invested to encourage their use. Some even believe that an EHR forces them to focus more on the technology than on the patient.

Research shows that these physicians commonly report several main complaints about EHR systems. According to a 2013 RAND study of professional satisfaction among physicians, major causes of dissatisfaction with EHRs include poor system functionality, cumbersome data entry, high upfront and ongoing costs, and inefficient and insufficient exchange of health information.

Professional satisfaction and practice sustainability are keys to helping physicians transition to EHR systems that enable high-quality, affordable care, according to the American Medical Association. The study found an indirect link between EHR satisfaction and overall professional satisfaction. Bottom line: Physicians don’t like using EHRs that create a barrier to achieving their most important goal — providing quality care for their patients.
NOT ALL EHRs ARE CREATED EQUAL

It’s for this reason that Greenway Health makes usability a priority. Physicians, nurses and other medical professionals are crucial members of our teams, and it’s their combined experiences and input that enable us to better address EHR functionality from the provider’s point of view. The result is an EHR that providers actually use — and use well. Our Prime Suite® EHR and practice management system is among the most usable systems on the market.

Prime Suite users reported that they use, on average, about two-thirds of the EHR’s functionality — higher than users rated any other major EHR system. 4

An EHR should “become invisible to us,” said Steven Schiebel, M.D., of Pediatric Associates, a large eight-location practice based in Bellevue, Washington, summing up what providers really want from their EHRs. Dr. Schiebel likened it to driving a car: you don’t think about it, you just do it.

“We’ve gotten to that point with Prime Suite,” he continued. “It’s a product that doesn’t get between us and the patient. It becomes a tool like a stethoscope or an ultrasound. We can simply use it to take care of our patients.”

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—Steven Schiebel, M.D., Pediatric Associates
Streamlined clinical workflow

Workflow is crucial to how well your practice works. Navigating through multiple steps just to find the screen you need wastes time and energy better spent treating patients, watching your kid’s soccer game, or even — dream of dreams — grabbing some time for yourself.

Because patients’ problem descriptions don’t follow a set pattern, the Prime Suite clinical action bar provides one-click access to all chart sections. The facesheet view summarizes clinical data of all types — from history to orders — while enabling quick access for updates.

Matthew Abel, M.D., of Candlewood Valley Pediatrics, New Milford, Connecticut, reported that with Prime Suite, “You don’t have to have multiple clicks to get to just one place; it’s just click and you’re there. Next. Next. You don’t have to keep going back out, coming back in. It all flows seamlessly.”
Physicians frequently cite cumbersome data entry as the worst offender when it comes to poor EHR functionality. Doctors who consider their own typing skills as weak were more likely to report this as a problem.

Kamran Goudarzi, M.D., of Vein & Laser Surgery of Wilmington, Delaware, for example, is among those clinicians who never learned to type — which essentially means he’s “computer illiterate,” he admitted. While he had difficulty with other EHRs he used, Prime Suite enabled him to achieve better results. “To be able to turn a computer on and use it and see about 70 patients a day — that’s ease of use, by anybody’s definition.”

Users of template-based systems such as Prime Suite were less likely to complain about usability. Customizable clinical templates help providers work more quickly and efficiently, regardless of their typing skills or computer literacy. Prime Suite has thousands of templates and gives providers the option of creating or sharing their customized templates.

Ken R. Buczynski, M.D., of Wellspring Family Medicine, PC in Oakland, Maryland, also enjoys Prime Suite’s usability. “If you can send emails, you can use Prime Suite,” he said.
Efficiency for work-life balance

How important is work-life balance for providers? In a recent Greenway survey, providers revealed that they were willing to pay, on average, more than $300 for just one additional hour with their families. Dr. Goudarzi appreciates the improved work-life balance he has achieved by using Prime Suite. “Now, I can go home and have dinner with my family, put the children to bed at 8:30, and then I can get on my computer if needed,” he said.
“Delivering quality healthcare has always been about teamwork between doctors, nurses and families,” said Josephine Young, M.D., MPH, pediatrician and chief operating officer of Pediatric Associates. Using tablets and smartphones with Prime Mobile™ in conjunction with Prime Suite, the practice’s 80-plus providers have access to patient information at their fingertips, whether they’re in one of eight clinic locations, at a hospital, at home or even out of town.
Speech-to-text with Prime Speech

Some physicians prefer dictation for a variety of reasons: because it fits their work style better, because it saves time over typing, or because their patient population is unusual, making template-based notes less appropriate for them. For those physicians, Greenway’s Prime Speech™ speech-to-text solution is the right option.

James T. Ingram, M.D., FACS, Greenway’s chief medical officer, worked directly with the development team on the design of Prime Speech. “I knew what I would want when we were developing Prime Speech, based on what I needed as a practicing surgeon. Usability was my biggest concern,” he said.

Dr. Ingram’s attention to detail pays off for providers. Tracy Grobarcik, registered nurse, clinical operations manager at Women’s Healthcare of Illinois in south Chicago, explained: “Dr. Steven Ambrose, our maternal-fetal specialist, has high-risk patients with multiple health issues; managing their care is complex. With Prime Speech he can direct their care and function without the transcriptionist, even entering his own orders. Also, the dictated notes reach the electronic chart about 200 percent faster.”
INTEROPERABILITY AND HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE

The patient whose care doesn’t require exchange of data outside the primary care provider’s system is becoming a rarity. Physicians in a variety of specialties and settings have expressed frustration about interoperability. All too often, communication among providers, payers and other organizations means having to rely on paper. Even within the same facility, lack of data flow between disparate systems can cause problems.

Using Greenway Exchange, practices have successfully implemented automated health information exchange in their communities.
Regional health information organizations

Doctors at Alpine Urology, a five-physician practice serving Boulder, Colorado, wanted to be a part of the Colorado Regional Health Information Organization (CORHIO) as soon as they learned about it. They felt the statewide health information exchange would be critical to improving care quality for all Coloradans.

By sharing Prime Suite data with CORHIO through Greenway Exchange, Alpine Urology became the first physician office in Colorado to connect with the statewide health information organization.

Connecting Prime Suite users to other IT systems

Doctors May-Grant Associates in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, uses Prime Suite, but its affiliated hospital, Lancaster General, uses EpicCare. Greenway collaborated with Epic to facilitate real-time exchange of patient information between the two EHRs.

“Greenway and Epic see this as enhancing each other and not competing against each other. That speaks volumes.”

—Mona S. Engle, RN

Immunization registries

Pediatric Medical Associates of San Diego, California, uses a profiled continuity of care document (CCD) from Prime Suite to report details required by immunization registries and San Diego County. For example, they eliminate manual double entry of data by sharing body-mass index records with the county’s obesity management initiatives using a single, automated CCD transaction to the San Diego Beacon Collaborative HIE.
“Quarterly collection percentages were 11 to 16% higher; my days in accounts receivable were reduced by 75%.”

—Erik Ashkin, M.D., Potomac Obstetrics & Gynecology

**REAP REWARDS, NOT RISK**

Some physicians believe they’ll ultimately lose money on an EHR as a result of high initial costs and ongoing maintenance fees. But an EHR is only expensive if it doesn’t help you practice more efficiently and collect what you’ve earned.

**Revenue cycle management**

Erik Ashkin, M.D., owner of Potomac Obstetrics & Gynecology in Rockville, Maryland, founded the new practice two years ago. “Without Greenway, I don’t know if success would have been a reasonable expectation,” Dr. Ashkin said. Greenway’s clinically driven revenue cycle management (RCM) solution, Greenway Practice®, delivered significant financial improvements over his last practice setting. With Greenway Practice, Dr. Ashkin’s quarterly collection percentages were 11 to 16 percent higher and his days in accounts receivable were reduced by 75 percent. “We deliver exceptional service with just two support professionals for three physicians,” he said. “With Greenway Practice, we can easily increase volume without adding staff.”
Better documentation for cleaner claims

Some Greenway customers report that increased revenue and efficiency has paid for their EHR investment in less than two years. Because their clinical documentation triggers appropriate billing codes that automatically flow to the billing system, they don’t miss charges.

Greenway claims processing helps ensure cleaner claims, which results in faster adjudication and faster payment.

Kerry Kelley, chief information officer of federally qualified health center (FQHC) PrimaryPlus based in Vanceburg, Kentucky, said, “Greenway understands the business very well. The financial impacts have been great for us, as far as better coding, more efficient billing, increased revenue and improved cash flow are concerned, and it all goes back to the flexibility. For me, it’s that relationship. It’s that partnership. It’s that trust. I know Greenway has my back.”

PrimaryPlus has used Prime Suite and Greenway Practice since 2008 to better coordinate care across the FQHC and improve financial operations. From his first introduction to Greenway’s solutions, Kelley said that they “literally blew me away.”
MORE BENEFITS, FEWER BURDENS

Better access for better care

One of the best things about Prime Suite is the ability to have a patient’s entire history available in an emergency, no matter where you are or what time it is, according to Dr. Goudarzi of the Vein & Laser Center, a Prime Suite user since 2010. “When the patient calls me at 2 o’clock in the morning, I can go immediately, look up the entire medical record, see what drugs they’re on. There’s a picture of the patient, so I recognize who the patient is and I know what surgery has been done. I didn’t have this with the other systems I had,” Dr. Goudarzi said.
Clinical continuity

“The communication aspect, the continuity aspect, is very, very important to me,” said Jason A. Cannell, D.O., of Boulder Community Hospital in Colorado. “We have multiple providers, 60-plus, just in terms of the outpatient setting. Cross-communication between the providers is big — across front desk staff, nursing staff, our lab techs — all of us.”

“Being able to provide the best available care to all of our patients in the community goes back to communication among the providers and the staff of all of the clinics associated with the community hospital,” Dr. Cannell added.

Coordination of care across the healthcare community requires superior clinical data interchange for Colonial Healthcare, a primary and preventive care provider with multiple locations serving Sumter, Columbia, Hartsville and Camden, South Carolina. As a patient-centered medical home (PCMH) working toward Level 3 recognition, communicating with patients is also vital. The use of Prime Suite, the Prime Patient® portal, Greenway Exchange™ interoperability engine, and the Prime Practice Analytics™ cloud-based care coordination service helps Colonial Healthcare exchange clinical information quickly and accurately throughout the care community and with patients. “It has opened up our practice to include the care coordinator role,” said Lissa Lara, chief executive officer of Colonial Healthcare.

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—Jason A. Cannell, D.O., Boulder Community Hospital
The Prime Patient portal helped improve patient engagement for Palm Beach OB/GYN in Florida. "Patient satisfaction has gone through the roof because the patients now have the ability to communicate with us, much better than through the phone," said Samuel Lederman, M.D. The practice’s patients use the portal to make appointments, pay their bills, get lab results and even ask their doctors questions.

Effective patient connection today means communicating with patients using the format they prefer. Greenway Link™ helps Greenway customers do that by offering automated messaging for patient education, appointments, lab results, prescription notifications, recalls and even birthday greetings using the mode selected by the patient. Choices include secure email, text, mobile app and voice messaging.
QUALITY CARE INCENTIVES AND RECOGNITION

Whether you’re striving for meaningful use (MU), physician quality reporting system (PQRS) incentives, or qualifying as a patient-centered medical home (PCMH), Greenway solutions support the requirements you must meet.

For practices with a significant Medicare and Medicaid patient population, more stringent requirements for Stage 2 meaningful use and growing penalties for opting out of PQRS make it essential to use an information system that makes it easy to gather and report on data for both programs. Eligible professionals pursuing meaningful use can earn credit for their data under the PQRS Medicare EHR Incentive Pilot program, and the MU 2014 Edition-certified Prime Suite enables them to collect data on the same sample of beneficiaries for both the meaningful use clinical quality requirement and satisfactory PQRS reporting. ⁹

While MU and PQRS incentives encourage improvements to quality care, PCMH recognition indicates true partnership with patients in managing their care. The PCMH model combines approaches that work well in today’s primary care environment — engaged, productive staff and a disciplined approach to finances. ¹⁰ Building a trusting relationship between the care team and patient is another foundation principle.

Greenway offers automated credits toward recognition as a PCMH by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), official documentation for submission, and integrated processes that don’t interfere with workflow.

Requirements are complex, but if you’ve qualified for meaningful use incentives, you’re halfway there, according to Mina Harkins, assistant vice president for recognition programs at NCQA. ¹¹
With an established marketplace presence dating back more than 30 years, Greenway Health continues to lead the way in health information technology by offering smarter solutions that help providers compete in an evolving value-based healthcare system. Greenway offers innovative tools to improve workflows, from clinical efficiencies to coding to revenue cycle management and more, so providers and spend more time doing what they do best — caring for patients.

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REFERENCES


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