

## EMR Characteristics

### Introduction

This document includes a list of various characteristics a provider might want to consider when adopting an electronic medical record into their practice. To utilize this document, providers should first consider the individual needs of their practice. Then one can look through this list to choose the characteristics most important to the provider's practice when reviewing EMR products. This list can then be used in conjunction with the EMR comparison tool to choose an EMR that best meets a provider's needs.

### EMR Characteristics/Features

#### Objective Features

**Practice management:** Tools to assist in the management of your practice.

- **Registration** - Ability to enter and store registration information such as demographic data, insurance information, etc.
- **Scheduling** - Ability to make and manage appointments. May have features such as graphical calendar views for individual providers, automated patient reminders, appointment conflict resolution, etc.
- **Billing** - Ability to manage billing functions such as entry of information, generation of billing documents and management of payment. Experience with MENTAL HEALTH billing and billing codes
- **Authorization** – Ability to track and manage utilization review information.
- **Consents**- Ability to generate and store relevant consent documents.
- **Business report generation** - Ability to generate reports relevant to the business management of a practice.

**Communication:** Tools important to communication with other providers, patients, etc.

- **With providers (report generation)** - Ability to manage documents and communication with other providers, such as customizable reports or letters generated after a visit to collaborate care efficiently.
- **With patients** - Ability to provide access to patients to their health information through patient portals. The ability for patients to communicate electronically securely with providers through this portal.
  - Ability to contact patients for missed appointments,
  - Ability to track patients who have not been seen in awhile
- **Patient education materials** - Ability to store and grant access to patient education materials for patients.

**Documentation/Data Entry:** Mechanism by which the documentation of your clinical practice is managed.

- **Clinical rating scales/ screening tools** – Ability to generate, store, and possibly administer a variety of clinical rating scales or screeners.
- **Psychotherapy notes** – Ability to maintain psychotherapy notes with a differing levels of access from other types of notes.

- **Customized forms/templates** – Ability to create and customize templates for your notes.
- **Diagnosis/Problem List** – Ability to generate and maintain a problem/diagnosis list that is then available for insertion into charts, used for billing purposes, etc.

**Medication management:** Tools in an EMR that relate to medication prescriptions

- **ePrescribing** – Ability to write prescriptions electronically, with or without the ability to send prescriptions to pharmacies electronically.
- **Support for formularies** – Ability to maintain and utilize various formularies as part of ePrescribing.
- **Drug interactions/Allergies** – Ability to automatically identify drug interactions or Allergies based on what is being prescribed for a given patient
- **Support for ePrescribing Controlled substances** – Ability to support prescribing of controlled substances.
- **Black box warnings** – Ability to generate alerts regarding black box warnings.
- **FDA indications** – Ability to compare medications prescribed and problem lists/diagnosis and generate comments on FDA indications.

**Misc:**

- **Results retrieval:** Ability to retrieve and report results for Laboratory tests, Radiologic Imaging, Pathology reports, etc.
- **Order entry** – Ability to manage entry and execution of orders.
- **Patient registries** – Ability to track and maintain patient registries for research and other purposes.
- **Clinical decision support** – Ability to offer evidence based decision support (reminders for monitoring med levels/metabolic labs, prescribing patterns, etc).
- **Low/High volume scanning** – Ability to handle input of paper documents through scanning
- **Telephone Triage/Task Management** – Ability to document and manage phone based encounters and tasks.

**Design/Qualitative Features**

- **Ease of use** – How easily is the interface navigated?
- **User friendliness** – Does the interface “make sense”, is it intuitive?
- **Mechanism of documentation** - How does a clinician make a note? (dictate/voice recognition into a form, type free text, check boxes)
- **Adaptability** – How easily is the system customized to fit your style of practice – to what extent are product enhancements user-led?
- **Organization of information** – How is clinical information organized, does it mimic a paper chart or does it organize information in a novel fashion?
- **Presentation of information** – How is the information presented? Is it easy to read and synthesize?
- **Workflow:** How does the EMR work within the context of your office workflow?

## Technical Characteristics

- **Transitional issues:** How is data transferred to the EMR?
- **Data storage/back-up** – Mechanism by which the data from the system is maintained and stored. May be on-site (computer in the office) or off-site (server or service over the internet – ‘the cloud’). How is the data backed up in case of problems with the system?
- **Information security/Encryption** – The ability to adequately secure data for confidentiality
- **Confidentiality options** – The ability of the tool to allow for different levels of access to notes based on note types, provider type, information type, etc.
- **Interfaces** - Does the system support pen/tablet input? Handwriting Recognition? Voice recognition software and transcription?
- **Mobile device support** – Can the system be easily interfaced with using mobile devices such as smart phones or tablets.
- **Adherence to open standards** – Ability of the information within the tool to be ported or transferred to another system.

## Operational Issues

- **Installation/Training/Support** – How is the system set up in the practice? How are you and staff trained on its use? What support is offered when the system does not work as planned?
- **Vendor Characteristics** - What is the market share this vendor maintains? What is the vendor’s reputation? How long has the vendor been around? Does the vendor have CCHIT certification? Does the vendor offer any additional services (i.e. web design)?
- **Financial/Cost Issues** - What is the start up/installation cost? Is there a cost for training? What are the warranty or maintenance options/costs?
- **Meaningful use** - To what extent does the vendor provide functionality updates for each stage of meaningful use? Does the vendor provide support in helping to obtain the maximum incentive payment?