

Six Tips for Evaluating an EHR Software System

CHIROTOUCH PERSPECTIVES



Overview

In an industry teeming with new government mandates, chiropractic practices are being challenged to keep up. Fortunately, EHR software can be a chiropractor's best friend, supplying much-needed clarity in a blur of healthcare transitions. Implementing an EHR in your practice provides quicker data access, greater interoperability, better accuracy, fewer staff hours, and higher reimbursements—and it's easier than you think.

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At this juncture, there's no question as to whether or not EHRs are here to stay. They are a clear requirement for participation in the broader healthcare structure and a must-have for any practitioner serious about evolving in-parallel with the industry and complying with government mandates. EHR systems streamline a practice, increase efficiencies, lower staff requirements, reduce overhead, speed up documentation, and increase compliance. And because the purchase of an EHR system is such a game-changer, it's crucial that the selection is an informed one. For small practices, choosing the right EHR system is not to be taken lightly; it is a hefty decision that requires evaluation, planning, and research. Let's take a look at

six key guidelines for executing a comprehensive EHR evaluation.

1. Define Your Key Goals

Take your time to truly define which features are most important to you. Sit down with your team and map out each individual's specific wants, needs, and must-haves for performing their daily duties. It is critical to define exactly what you want your technology to achieve for you within your practice. Are you looking for a faster workflow, more autonomy from front desk tasks, better coding and note quality, quicker turnaround, or more accurate reporting?

Make a list of requirements such as expedient note-taking and functional macros, an air-



tight billing system, or user-friendliness. Decide which items are requirements for your particular practice, and how much customization your practice will need. What does your particular office structure necessitate from a workflow and scheduling standpoint? What report capabilities are vital to your business? Define a comfortable price, and consider which optional features will affect this number. Be flexible where you can.

2. Take a Look at the Track Record

Reputation is vital. Know what

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type of company you want to work with, and don't settle for less when starting this relationship. What systems do your fellow colleagues suggest? Make sure that you're not just buying software, but you're also securing a strong and longstanding relationship. Serious vendors should be able to offer you references from fellow providers who currently use the software, and they should be able to demonstrate a long history of integrity.

3. Talk Training

Without proper training, even the best EHR implementation will be subject to struggles. When evaluating your prospective EHR partner, ensure that you understand key aspects of their training package:

- How many hours of training are included?
- Is training live or online?
- What documentation and training tools are available?
- Are there are community forums?
- What is the billing rate for additional training, if needed?

- How does this training package compare to competitors?

4. Demo before Deciding

Before setting up your demonstrations, create a list of questions you want to ask the representative. Having this list handy will help you effectively use demo time to check off your major points of inquisition. Aim to demo at least a small handful of vendors (four or five) to help you understand the breadth of the market and how each vendor compares to one another. This can not only help you make a proper selection from the start, but it can increase the satisfaction you will feel down the

each vendor to walk you through those scenarios within the system. If you are still unsure, feel free to request a second demonstration that targets new questions or explores additional, deeper functionality. Be sure to include key team members from your end. After all, every staff member will need to become intimately familiar with your final selection.

5. Review the Comprehensive Capabilities

An EHR system can automate and streamline a majority of processes within your practice, but a total package shouldn't stop at the EHR

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road by understanding what is realistically available in the market (reducing the “grass is always greener” syndrome and buyer’s remorse). Come prepared with some common scenarios and ask

interface. Along with training and support, a truly client-invested company will go leaps and bounds further, providing you with additional services to support your business.

- Do you need an integrated credit card merchant?
- What about revenue cycle management?
- How about automated appointment reminders, patient statements, and data backup?

Your EHR solution provider should be a perpetual partner to your practice, offering you the practice management tools necessary to automate functions both within and in conjunction with your EHR.

6. Check the Cost

When it comes to running a business, cost is an important factor. Evaluating the price of an EHR may seem straightforward—but the eventual toll on your wallet may not be. As code changes roll out and new government mandates hit the streets, EHR vendors must apply development towards keeping you in compliance. And the manner and efficiency in which an EHR keeps pace will vary. An EHR that is cheap at the outset may cost you over and over again in a lack of support, capabilities, and feature

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development. Tell your vendor about how you run your practice.

- Do you want certified software?
- Are you a multidisciplinary practice?
- Do you know what features are built into the price of support and training?
- How does the price of each EHR compare to others in the industry?
- Does their price meet their capabilities?
- Can they demonstrate examples of your return on investment?

Make sure you measure the value of each EHR system carefully and select the one that will sail along with your practice without putting you underwater down the line.

Selecting an EHR system is one of the most defining decisions you will make for your practice. And the rewards far outweigh the initial task of implementation. Choosing a system that will act as a supportive buoy for your practice well into the foreseeable future is a critical decision. That is why it's vitally



important to effectively evaluate cost, capabilities, and the company itself thoroughly before jumping in.