Dermatology Coding Alert

Clip and Save: 10 Pluses Justify the Hefty Cost of Implementing an EHR System

Overcome cost objections with these proven EHR winning points

With new technology emerging all the time, the move to electronic health records (EHR) is on. But is EHR right for your practice? Know the potential pluses before making your decision.

• **Improved office efficiency**. By having patient information readily accessible to all pertinent staff members, your office will save time and effort, ultimately running more efficiently. EHR will give you the "ability to access information when necessary," says **Pati Trites** with Advocates for Documentation Integrity and Compliance in Augusta, Mich.

• **Improve staff productivity.** With increased efficiency comes increased productivity. "EHR allows entry of patient orders at the point of care, linking results of patient records and eliminating most paper," says **Ian S. Easton, PhD**, past president of the American College of Medical Practice Executives and current department head of applied technology for Coastal Georgia Community College in Brunswick, Georgia.

• **Improved patient satisfaction.** Quicker access to patient information, ease with scheduling, and billing will naturally lead to increases in patient satisfaction.

• **Faster processing.** For example, an EHR system "reduces delays in charge information getting from the physician's office and on-site ancillary services to the billing office," Easton says. "Everything gets posted and sent to the insurance company faster, speeding up payments," says **Robin Roach, CEO** of Health Data Solutions in St. Albans, W.V. "Our clients who use EHR, including some large orthopedic, physical therapy and ENT practices, have dropped to 43 days or less in A/R."

• **Improved documentation and lower rates of error.** EHR systems solve issues of illegible handwriting, reduce data entry errors, and help eliminate missing/required patient information. Plus, when you do encounter a coding error, you can easily fix it and submit affected claims.

• **Improved and easier HIPAA compliance.** You should select an EHR system that helps, rather than hinders, your HIPAA compliance. With good security and password use, electronic methods can make HIPAA compliance easier than securing paper records. Look for systems that protect patient information and allow you to secure the information you record in the system.

• **Expanded backup options.** Electronic systems allow you to have automated backups of your information. The system could include on-site or off-site storage of the information. This allows you to develop a plan as to what you can do should your office become unavailable, such as in a natural disaster or fire at your office.

• **Improved quality of care.** With complete and immediate access to patient records, your providers may be able to provide better, faster, more personalized care.

• **Reduced expenses.** By eliminating your need for most transcription activity, cutting your need for file clerks, and dramatically reducing your need for paper storage facilities, your office will save money in the long run.

• **Fewer missed charges.** With the ability to create specific documentation templates for physicians as well as the elimination of lost superbills, you'll likely see a reduction in services that just never get billed. Before having an EHR system, "when we audited charts and reviewed them with our clients, we found that many services were performed that just weren't documented. And thus, they were never billed," Roach says. "All of that is gone now."