Health Information Compliance Alert

Buyer's Guide: Stumped By EHR Choices? Chart Your Next Move With These Tech Selection Tips

Check vendor certifications and ratings to narrow down options.

EHR missteps could result in extra headaches --" and financial losses -" if you don't take the time to do your homework now. Read on for expert advice on choosing the best product for your practice.

Savings: Embrace the stimulus incentive as an opportunity to improve not only the quality of care, but your practice's financial stability as well, **Jim Morrow, MD,**Allscripts medical director, 2007 recipient of HIMSS' Physician IT Leader of the Year honor and former VP/CIO of North Fulton Family Medicine in Cumming, Ga., tells **Eli.** Case in point: Morrow's Ga.-based practice cut costs by $33.15 per patient visit when it made the switch to EHR.

If efficiency and cost reduction aren't enough to convince you, consider the increasing penalty for using paper in the near future, says Morrow, not only from Medicare, but from all payers since they are likely to follow the fed's lead.

Say "no" to penalties and find your best EHR fit and a reliable vendor with the following advice:

• Talk to **other doctors** in your specialty, suggests Morrow. What do they use? Do they like it? Specialtyspecific organizations and reference Web sites are also good sources of information.

• Check out surveys done by **KLAS,** an organization which independently monitors vendor performance, at www.klasresearch.com to view different product rankings,Morrow says.

• Look to HIMSS' **Davies Award recipients,** which have deployed EHR successfully, at www.himss.org/davies, suggested Barnes. Access additional EHR case studies at www.himssehra.org/casestudies and http://cchit.org/about/casestudies/index.asp.

• Insist on a **customizable** product that can adapt to your practice size, specialty and workflow, so you can use it "meaningfully" at the point-of-care with patients, Barnes tells **Eli.**

• Review the Certification Commission for Healthcare Information Technology (**CCHIT**) Web site at www.cchit.org/choose/index.asp to see which products are 2008 certified. The criteria, which include interoperability,seem to be a likely level moving forward, noted **Justin T.Barnes,** chairman of HIMSS' EHR Association and vice president of Greenway Medical Technologies in Ga., at the HIMSS event.

Update: Check out CCHIT's recently released 2009 certification criteria on its Web site, but realize that it won't start testing products against these standards until the government's HIT standards committee reports to the Department of Health and Human Services later this year.

What's new: The 2009 criteria focuses on enhancing standards-based interoperability in line with Healthcare Information Technology Standards Panel's (HITSP's) recommendations,Barnes tells **Eli.** It makes sense to startresearching your options now among 2008 CCHIT-certified EHRs, and with the 2009 certified products as they become available, Barnes advises. Browse more **EHR research sources** at www.himssehra.org, www.ehrdecisions.com and www.mgma.com.

Bottom line: "Now is the time to implement electronic records to take advantage of this money. Because this is the most you are ever going to see, I'm pretty confident about that," Morrow asserts. Start discussions now, urged Barnes,it takes time to properly deploy and implement EHR so work on getting this into your budget cycle now.