

## Assessing the Benefits

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### More accurate coding and billing

With more appropriate coding and more accurate billing charge captures, many providers see a consistent increase in revenue. The EHR helps providers document and capture steps taken during the exam in a more detailed and accurate way and easily organizes records by medical problem. Additionally, all EHRs provide decision support and templates to help with coding. While vendors suggest that templates can be used out of the box, providers should review and edit templates before go-live to fit office workflow.

### Other cost savings:

*Providers in Rhode Island consistently quote a decrease in annual transcription costs, ranging from \$10,000 for smaller offices to \$65,000 for larger facilities.*

### Quality reporting

Unlike paper records, EHRs allow for reporting to quality improvement programs like the Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI). Established by the 2006 Tax Relief and Health Care Act, PQRI offers physicians' incentive payments for reporting data on certain quality measures for services provided to Medicare beneficiaries.

In 2008 the program included 119 quality measures that apply across specialties. In July, CMS released the 2009 specifications for data that can be submitted through an electronic medical record. EHRs can report a wide range of critical information such as vaccinations, drug-to-drug interactions, and missed appointments. In 2007 and 2008 the financial incentive for reporting PQRI measures was 1.5%.

### EHRs improve PQRI reporting.

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*For more information on PQRI incentives, please visit [www.cms.hhs.gov](http://www.cms.hhs.gov).*

### Off-site access to records

If you work from home, on rotation, or on-call, an EHR will change everything for the better. You have instant remote access to patient charts, lab tests, and patient notes when you need them. As one provider says, "When I am on call, I use the internet to access patient records. These patients are complex and they are not mine. In other settings, I would have had to send them to the hospital or would have had trouble treating them safely. Now, when a patient calls with a heart complaint, I can see their electrocardiogram through the EHR, and make the right decision."

Some providers appreciate the flexibility they now have with their schedules. What had to be done in the office can now be completed at home, as one doctor said, "If I choose to complete my notes or prepare for tomorrow after dinner with my family, I can do that sitting on the couch."

### A provider describes his on-call experience...

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## Patients' approval

Most clinicians who use an EHR in the exam room hear the same response from patients: it's "really cool!" Patients appreciate innovating providers using technology to improve their healthcare, and associate EHR use with high quality care. Patients are most likely to see the benefits of EHR use when exam rooms are set up to encourage doctor-patient interaction. When deciding where to place equipment, ask physicians for input—for example, many physicians like to be able to turn the monitor for patients to see, so that patients can be more involved in their own care.

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## Reduction in duplicate labs and tests

Patient history, lab and test results are all captured on the computer, allowing the clinician to quickly and easily see important information during the office visit. One provider using an EHR said, "it's unbelievable that about 95% of lab visits and x-rays are available to me with a click." With lab histories available at the time of the visit, duplicate or unnecessary labs and tests can be avoided. This saves time and money while decreasing frustration for clinicians working in the office or on-call. The patient also benefits from these increased efficiencies.

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## Clear and complete documentation

One of the best known benefits of adopting an EHR is improved documentation. EHR users agree—their patient records are clearer and more robust, and that means more informed treatment of their patients. Problems lists are up to date, as are medication lists, allergies, and health maintenance tasks. With more complete records to reference, improved accuracy and legibility, the incidence of medical errors is reduced. And you never have to worry about a lost paper record.

Providers appreciate being able to print out notes to hand patients at the end of a visit. This supporting documentation helps to keep patients involved in their care and remind them of steps they can take to stay healthy at home. EHRs can also instantly print letters for patients who need documentation for work, school, or camp.

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