

Selecting the Right EHR for Your Practice

Select CCHIT certified EHRs

The Certification Commission for Healthcare Information Technology (CCHIT) was created to help providers understand the benefits they should expect from an EHR. Although EHR certification is voluntary, the commission has reviewed thousands of products and created consensus around standards for EHRs. CCHIT is a great starting point to help you learn what to look for in an EHR, and they list questions to ask each vendor as you determine which system is best for your office.

Providers must use CCHIT certified EHRs in order to qualify for additional reimbursement from BCBSRI and United, and CCHIT certification is required by HHS to qualify for Stark, AKS exceptions, and safe harbors that permit health care organizations to assist you with the cost of an EHR.

CCHIT is a great starting point to help you learn what to look for in an EHR and advice on narrowing down your EHR choices. For more information, visit www.cchit.org

Network with other providers

Discuss EHRs with other providers in your community or specialty. Ask those who utilize an EHR what system they have, what criteria they used for selection, and what benefits and challenges they have experienced, and they will probably tell you what they would do differently and what steps they felt were effective. The best learning will come from a colleague. Most providers are willing to give you a demonstration of their EHR. Ideally, you should see three EHRs to get a feel for their workflows—whether through other providers or through vendors.

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Use research to narrow your selection to three options

Select one person or a core group to do all the fact finding and research on EHR options. Start with a list of EHR vendors and narrow your list utilizing carefully compiled screening questions. Once you have narrowed your product list to three choices, invite each vendor to present their system to your office or organization.

10 EHR Vendors by RI Market Share

*eClinicalWorks
Cerner - PowerChart
GE Centricity
Athena Heath
Lighthouse MD
Next Gen
Polaris - EpiChart
Amazing Charts
MediTech
Practice Partner*

Data from live HEALTH survey, 1/09

Review Medical Society websites for helpful information

These sites were most frequently recommended by providers using EHRs as beneficial during EHR selection. They typically offer articles, user-friendly guides, and additional information about EHRs. Browsing these sites at the beginning of the selection process can help focus your search.

*Rhode Island Medical Society
www.rimed.org*

*American Academy of Family Practice
www.aafp.org*

*American College of Physicians
www.acponline.org*

Learn the difference between a hosted ASP and the Client/Server model

The **Hosted ASP model** is a remotely hosted system accessed via the internet using a VPN or private network to protect users from potential security issues. The remote system is managed by an IT company for a monthly service fee. The upfront cost for an ASP model is low, but constant for every month you utilize the service. This model does not require your office to purchase or to maintain any servers, which are the greatest hardware expense of a system. The ASP provider should also handle backups and disaster recovery for you. A potential downfall to this model is that it can be slower than the Client/Server model because the server is located off-site.

The **Client/Server model** is a locally hosted system that is managed by your office. It means you have control over protecting your data and maintaining the server. The system can also be faster because the server is stored onsite. The downfall to the Client/Server model is that it has high upfront hardware and software costs and requires the availability of at least one technical resource to maintain the system.

Hosted ASP vs. Client/Server Model

Which is better? It depends on your practice.

Compile your screening questions

To most effectively evaluate your options, compile a list of screening questions related to your practice workflow. Ask each vendor the same questions during your initial screening and the demonstration phase of the selection process. This will help keep the vendors' presentations relevant and on-track. Some of your questions should be specific to your specialty, especially if your specialty is procedure oriented.

During a demonstration, it is helpful to ask the demonstrator to follow a script that your selection team creates. This way, you can be sure to understand how the system would work with your workflow, and you will be able to compare systems easily. Score each vendor using a grading sheet and invite all your employees to join in the demonstration. Pizza and soda are a plus here!

Ask "show-me" questions

"Can you show me how to generate height and weight growth charts on the same screen?"

"Can you show me how to write out this dose of amoxicillin (or another complicated script)?"

"Can we use different technologies?"
