

EMR System – Can your vendor sell you one?



EMR System - Can Your EMR Vendor Sell You One?

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You will find people using 'EMR System' and 'EMR Software' reciprocally, leading you to believe that they stand for the same thing. In fact, as shown below, they are quite different and EMR Software is only one of the many parts of an EMR System.

The term "system" is derived from the Greek word systema, which means to "place together" and defines a system as "an integrated set of interoperable elements, each with clearly specified and pre-defined capabilities, working seamlessly to perform value-added processing to enable a user to achieve set objectives."

What is an EMR System?

An Electronic Medical Records (EMR) System includes the following ingredients:

- 1. Infrastructure** - Physical and hardware system parts. For example, workstations and servers, tablet PC, laptops, monitors, scanners, networking parts like routers and bridges, etc.
- 2. Software** - Application software (EMR or EHR Software), operating system software (Windows 2003 server, for example), utilities, and other applications like instant messaging, fax servers, networking software, lab interfaces (with Quest, Labcorp), ePrescribing, etc.
- 3. People** - Teams involved in using, maintaining or managing the EMR - this includes the clinical and administrative staff, health practitioners, etc. All these people need to receive the right level of training in order to use the EMR effectively.
- 4. Business Processes** - Standard procedures, instructions, and steps involved in keeping the EMR System running without any issues. This includes patient appointment scheduling, appointment reminders, billing, co-pay, etc.
- 5. Data** - Information captured, used, and supported by a system, including documents, images and databases.

It is clearly evident that EMR software is just one ingredient of an EMR System. It is simply not good enough to put together motley of ill-fitting pieces in a Medical Practice and expect them to make your operations more efficient since the various pieces may not work seamlessly and will certainly not perform value added processing.

When Physicians buy EMR Software from software-only vendors, they will typically get the following:

1. EMR or EHR Software (Application software)
2. Application Database (with required Database objects)
3. Configurable Lab and Pharmacy interfaces
4. Specifications of recommended hardware and software

As you can see, there is a vast difference between the parts listed above (as part of an EMR System) and what typical EMR software vendors will typically provide.

Medical Specialists can provide quality healthcare to their patients but do not have the necessary expertise to assemble all the pieces required to build and implement an EMR System that will integrate all the required pieces of hardware and software. It is a synergistic exercise that requires close alliance between the EMR vendor, Clinical Staff, Administrative (Billing) Staff, Information Technology (IT) Support staff, and Medical Specialists.

By working with a proficient EMR consulting company to build and integrate all required elements of a customized EMR System, doctors can reduce the risk involved with any systems integration project, ensure notable implementation and maximize their financial returns from EMR software deployment.

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