Don't Like Your EHR?
Then Try a Different Approach to Training

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Ever since the push towards electronic health record usage in the medical field was kicked into full swing, complete with advertised financial incentives for providers who incorporate EHRs into their practices within the next couple of years, EHR adoption rates have slowly started to improve. The 2008 National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey, conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics, reported that 41.5 percent of physicians are using some form of EHR system within their practices; a figure that climbed dramatically from 34.8 percent in 2007. Though preliminary data from 2009 suggests that such numbers are continuing to climb, the statistics aren't all that remarkable as of yet, with only 43.9 percent of physicians getting on board in total.

Given the media buzz surrounding EHR implementation, it's surprising to see only a 2.4 percent increase in adoption among medical professionals, especially given the winning combination of monetary motivation and industry-induced pressure. In fact, one can't help but wonder if EHR adoption has been halted by the knowledge among providers that many of those who do currently have systems in place are finding themselves less than satisfied with their investments.

The problem with many of today's EHRs is that they don't come equipped with the proper amount of training and support for those who actually need to use them on a regular basis. Poor training, coupled with an initial inability on the part of providers to select the packages best suited for them, has left many EHR adopters out in the cold as far as utilization and return on investment are concerned. As a result, EHR vendors, on a whole, seem to be getting a bad reputation, and the idea of having to fend for themselves on the EHR training and user support front has left many providers wondering if EHR implementation is really worth the money and the hassle.

Though this line of thinking is quite understandable – especially in practices wherein the decision-makers behind EHR adoption are not of the computer generation – what providers do need to realize is that when it comes to making the most of their EHRs, the right type of training can make all of the difference. A learning management system loaded with user-friendly content and customer support is one that can turn an otherwise frustrating educational experience into one that is smooth and ultimately successful. For this reason, those who have yet to adopt EHRs for fear that they'll end up constituting nothing but a tremendous

waste of money should instead focus their efforts on researching the training programs available today.

Along these lines, those who are less than thrilled with the way their EHRs operate in practice should consider the notion of going through the training process again, this time with the proper learning management system on hand. Though the financial and logistical implications of repeating the training process may seem unappealing, the reality is that without the knowledge as to how to utilize such systems, providers are never going to feel like they are getting their money's worth. Difficult as it may be to embrace the notion of spending even more money to eventually maximize one's return, at the end of the day, a second attempt at training can ultimately make the difference between classifying an integrated EHR as a sunk cost versus hailing it as a solid investment in the future of one's practice.

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