



The purchase of an Electronic Medical Records system for your practice can be a major change for the way you practice medicine. Apex Partners has extensive experience reviewing Electronic Medical Records products, and we would be happy to assist you in your selection of a new system. Included below are a few questions for you to consider as you contemplate the purchase of a new Electronic Medical Records system for your practice.

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- Portability of Records** . How easy is it to move your records to another system, or to share them with another physician's office or Hospital?
- Ease of Reporting** . Don't accept the vendor's assessment of "how easy". Take some real examples of the reporting you need for your practice, and use the vendor's reporting tool for yourself to see how easy it is to get the information you need. Reporting is a complex and critical component of the EMR. You need to be able to accurately analyze the data that comes from your EMR for a wide variety of needs.  
*(Is the EMR data recorded in Note form, as electronic data recordings, or as structured data? The data should be in a structured format. It is difficult to report on voice recordings or written notes.)*
- Data Protection** - Your practice, and the health of your patients, depends on the safety of your data. Consider RAID arrays, mirrored drives, Storage Area Networks (SANs), tape backups, real-time backups, and paper backup systems. Your EMR data should always be stored in more than 1 physical location, and be easily accessible.
- Planning for Down Time** - How often, and when, will the system be taken down? Does it need to be taken down for nightly backups? For upgrades? What is the length of downtime, and how can you care for your patients (*how can you access patient information*) without that access?
- Specialty specific functionality** - Does the EMR have functionality to support your specific specialty?
- Remote Access** - When accessed remotely, can you access full functionality through the use of your PC / Internet Browser, or does a Citrix Server need to be installed to support the use of the system? (*A Citrix Server significantly increases your cost and complexity of maintenance*).
- Equipment purchase** - How many PCs, laptops, tablet computers, BlackBerries, printers and servers will I need to purchase and support? What additional costs are you likely to incur? Who will help me determine requirements and configurations?
- Equipment hosting** – Will you host the EMR servers and communications equipment locally, or will you need to host that equipment at a remote hosting facility? Consider the advantages remote hosting offers in terms of redundant power, communication lines, cooling systems, fire suppression, security, data backup and data redundancy.

- Hardware and Software maintenance costs** - Who is responsible for the maintenance of software and hardware to support the EMR? What costs will my practice incur, above the cost of the EMR, to support this infrastructure? Will I need to hire additional full time Information Systems personnel to manage the system?
- Total Yearly Costs** - What is the full yearly cost of the product, including Purchase price, monthly fees, upgrade fees, software licensing fees, and support staff costs? What unexpected costs might you incur?
- Practice Management System interfacing** - How will this EMR interface with your billing and accounts receivable management system? *(Without the interface to the billing system, a practice loses one of the significant advantages of an EMR)*. What billing system(s) does the selected EMR interface with? Who maintains the interface? Who takes ownership for connectivity and data mapping issues?
- Initial and On-going training** - Who is responsible for the initial and ongoing training? Do I have to wait for someone to travel from a national office to coordinate training? Will training be on-site? What if I need training after the GO LIVE date?
- Availability of Support** - Is your support local or do you have to call an 800 number to get a recording and leave a message before support responds? How soon can a support person be on-site at my practice if I have a problem? Do you have local support, or centralized support which could delay on-site problem resolutions?
- Availability of Master File Maintenance Assistance** - What happens if I add a new Provider? Who helps me implement a new Provider? Who trains them? Are they local?
- Template Maintenance** - How do I change my templates? As my practice changes and I become more proficient on the system, who helps me adjust my templates? If I perform new procedures or implement new protocols, who will adjust the software to accommodate?
- Handling of Existing Paper Charts** - What do I do with my current paper charts? What are my conversion options? Who will help me through this difficult process?

**Review these questions with your choice of EMR vendors, and then review them with us. We believe you will be pleased with the difference.**