

## IN A NUTSHELL: Why Electronic Health Records?

EHRs and the ability to exchange health information electronically can improve the delivery of patient care. By adopting Electronic Health Records<sup>1</sup> and achieving Meaningful Use, clinicians can gain greater, more comprehensive access to patient information, make better decisions and save money. Other benefits include:

- Access to patient records from inpatient and remote locations for faster, more coordinated and more efficient care delivery
- Safer, more reliable prescribing
- Legible, complete documentation that facilitates accurate coding and billing
- Enhanced privacy and security of patient data
- Enhanced decision support with clinical alerts, reminders, and medical information

“Working with health IT made me a better and safer physician. Most importantly, my patients received better, safer care and improved outcomes.”

– David Blumenthal, M.D., M.P.P.,  
National Coordinator for Health IT

## Better Informed Clinical Decisions

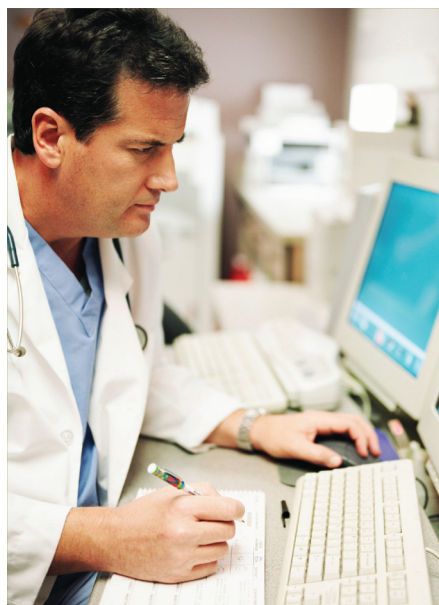
When all patient information is in one place, providers can make well informed treatment decisions quickly and safely:

- 97% reported that EHRs contributed to timely access to medical records and 82% reported that EHRs positively affected the quality of clinical decisions.<sup>2</sup>
- 80% reported that EHRs averted a known drug allergic reaction, and 71% avoided a potentially dangerous drug interaction.<sup>2</sup>
- By increasing access to guideline or protocol based care, delivery improvements ranged from absolute increases of 5 to 66 percent.<sup>3</sup>



## Improved Care Coordination and Communication

One in seven hospitalizations is the result of missing clinical information.<sup>4</sup> Ready access to a comprehensive patient record allows the provider to effectively coordinate care and communicate with patients and other healthcare professionals. Providers using fully functional EHRs have reported the following benefits:



- Six months after EHR implementation, 72.4% reported being in agreement on treatment goals and plans with other involved clinicians, compared to 56% of clinicians without EHRs.<sup>5</sup>
- 72% reported that EHRs positively affected communication with patients.<sup>2</sup>
- Gradual EHR implementation resulted in maintaining positive patient-physician relationships and fostering the sharing of medical information.<sup>6</sup>

## Why EHRs Now?

Though the initial costs and implementation challenges are considerable, delaying implementation today may cost you more tomorrow. The availability of an EHR may soon be a “minimum standard” for new physicians, public and private payers and patients.

- Providers eligible for Medicare incentive payments will see a decrease in the amount of funding available to them if they do not act soon.
- The 2009 Future Physicians of America survey found that 90% of medical students consider it important or very important to have an EHR where they choose to practice.<sup>7</sup> EHRs are an essential component of reform related efforts such as Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) and the Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH).
- A certified, operating EHR will be essential to participation in both the public and private pay for performance programs expected in the future.
- 42% of consumers are interested in establishing an online connection to their physician through a personal health record and 55% of consumers want the ability to communicate online with physicians.<sup>8</sup>
- CalHIPSO has funding for a limited time to assist health care providers in accessing Meaningful Use incentive payments that can be used to offset the costs of implementation.

## Potential for Long-Term Savings

A fully functional EHR system could lead to long-term savings in a variety of areas. Many providers report:

- Time savings from reduced chart chasing, chart storage, transcribing and phone conversations with labs or pharmacies
- Improved accuracy in coding and a decreased reporting burden
- Reduction in duplicate medical procedures

“There’s no question about it...with an Electronic Health Record, I practice better medicine.”

– Elise Singer, M.D.  
Family Medicine and Geriatrics  
CalHIPSO Chief Medical Officer

## Help Is Available!

- The federal government is committing unprecedented resources to support the adoption and use of certified EHRs. Between the strong national push for certified EHR adoption and the Meaningful Use incentive payments, there has never been a better time to take action:
- Eligible professionals can receive as much as \$44,000 over a five-year period through Medicare.
- For Medi-Cal, eligible professionals can receive as much as \$63,750 over six years.

### Resources for technical assistance are limited.

As providers rush to take advantage of time-limited incentives, vendor capacity will likely become strained. CalHIPSO is a trusted resource and advisor dedicated to helping providers take full advantage of this window of opportunity to realize the benefits of Health IT and Meaningful Use.

To join CalHIPSO now, please visit [www.calhipso.org](http://www.calhipso.org) and click “Join Now.”

1 As certified by an ONC-Authorized Testing and Certification Bodies (ONC-ATCBs).  
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4 Smith PC, et al. “Missing clinical information during primary care visits.” *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 2005.  
5 Graetz I, et al. “Care Coordination and Electronic Health Records: Connecting Clinicians.” *American Medical Informatics Association 2009 Symposium Proceedings*, 2009.  
6 Shield R, et al. “Gradual Electronic Health Record Implementation: New Insights on Physician and Patient Adaptation.” *Annals of Family Medicine*, 2010.  
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8 Keckley P, Eselius L. “2009 Survey of Health Care Consumers: Key Findings, Strategic Implications.” *Deloitte Center for Health Solutions*, 2009.



555 12th Street, 10th Floor | Oakland, California 94607  
Ph: 510-285-5723 | Toll-free: 888-589-4897 | E-mail: [outreach@calhipso.org](mailto:outreach@calhipso.org)