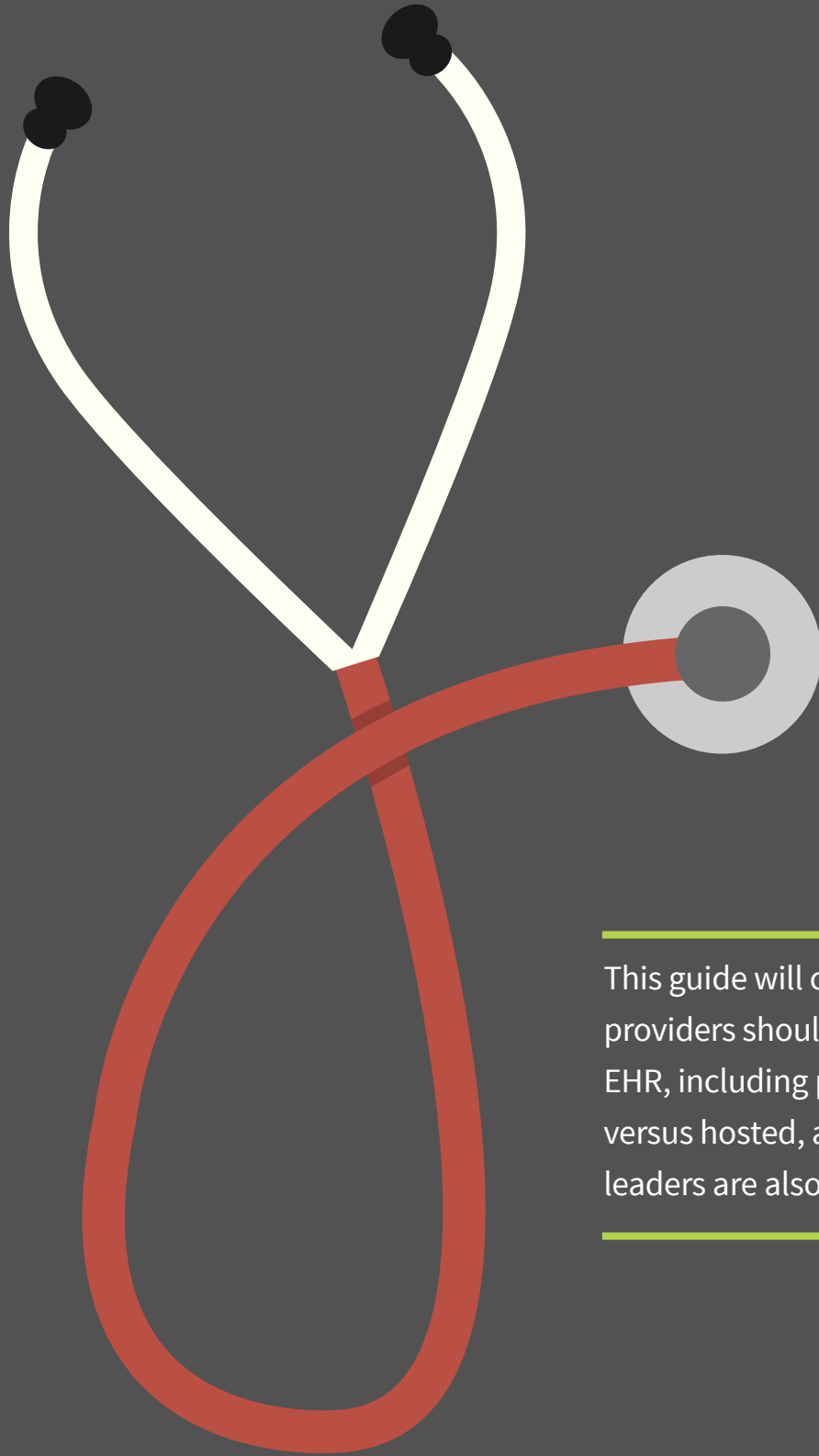


EHR BUYER'S GUIDE



This guide will cover the considerations providers should make when purchasing an EHR, including price, speciality needs, cloud versus hosted, and more. Current market leaders are also identified.

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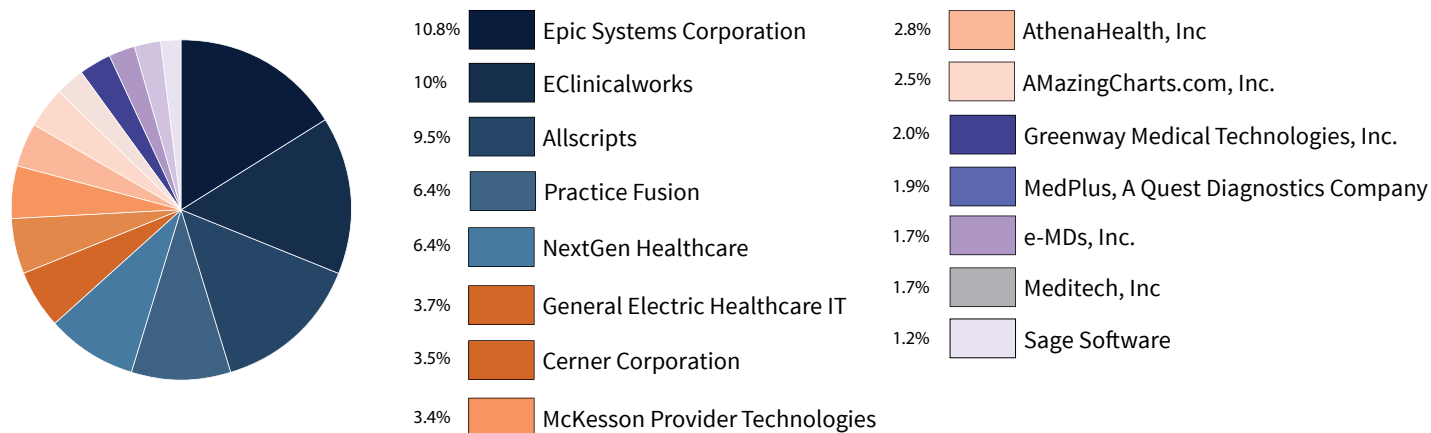
According to the American College of Physicians and AmericanEHR Partners, 39 percent of physicians would not recommend their EHR to a colleague.¹ This highlights the significant number of physicians who are not happy with their current software. Additionally, Black Book Rankings reports that of physicians switching EHRs, 79 percent are doing so because they did not adequately assess the needs of their practice before making a decision.²

To help physicians and healthcare professionals looking for an EHR avoid the same unsatisfactory experience, this guide will cover the considerations providers should make when buying an EHR. By starting with the market leaders and walking through different aspects of the purchasing decision – such as price, specialty considerations, cloud versus

hosted, and more – you'll learn the most important features to consider when purchasing an electronic health record system.

Epic is the obvious market leader, but its high price means it's often restricted to larger practices (25 doctors and over) as well as in-patient and out-patient facilities. The next few vendors each boast different characteristics that distinguish them from the market leader. eClinicalworks features robust template customization, which makes it very appealing to specialists, while Practice Fusion is a free, cloud-based system that has risen more rapidly in the market in the last few years than any other platform.⁴

Top 15 EHR Vendors ³



Certifications

In the electronic medical records market, two notable certifications exist: CCHIT and ONC-ATCB. The Certification Commission for Health Information Technology (CCHIT) is an organization dedicated to “accelerating the adoption of robust, interoperable health information technology”. Appointed by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology in 2006 to certify EHR technology, CCHIT’s certification process involves running test scripts of computer code throughout the EHR to evaluate the functionality of the program’s code and ensure the platform can perform all its functions as advertised.

CCHIT certification is more stringent than ONC-ATCB certification because it tests a wider range of functions. CCHIT has also started expanding its testing to EHRs targeted at specialties, and now offers certifications for behavioral health, dermatology, clinical research, cardio medicine, and other specialty EHRs. As noted early, CCHIT began certifying EHRs and other healthcare information technology in 2006, and its certification progress has become progressively rigorous as time has passed. Therefore, when choosing an EHR with CCHIT certification, note the year in which it was certified.

The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology’s certification uses a similar process to test the validity of EHR marketing claims, but the ONC focuses much more heavily on a system’s ability to meet Meaningful Use criteria, making this certification narrower than CCHIT’s stamp of approval.

The ONC-ATCB certification has two groups: modular and complete. Complete certification indicates that the product meets all the requirements of Meaningful Use, while a modular certification indicates that the product meets one of the criteria for Meaningful Use. The goal of modular certification is to give eligible professionals freedom in choosing how they format their EHR platform, though using modular certified products has become less common as providers seek out intuitive, comprehensive platforms.

When choosing an EHR, certification can be an excellent indicator not only of the quality of the product, but also of the viability of the vendor. For specialists, vendor viability has been a major factor in choosing to switch EHRs, with 84 percent expressing concern about the sustainability of their EHR vendor.²

Price

Price remains one of the most important factors when physicians choose an EHR. Practice Fusions' 23 percent increase in market share between 2012-2013 serves as evidence that physicians seek low-cost solutions.



Private practices are businesses, and must therefore weigh their EHR options in relation to their operating margins. In a recent study conducted by Health Affairs, the average cost for a 5 physician practice to implement and maintain an EHR for the first year was \$233,297, with an average cost of \$46,659 per physician. The EHR in question was GE's Centricity product, which is deployed as an on-premise hosted solution in a client-server model.⁵

The study also estimated that the first 60 days of implementation accounts for \$162,047. IT maintenance, which includes software licensing, hosting, and third party technical support, accounts for much of the remaining \$85,000.

While Health Affairs' study is informative, the price of owning an EHR will vary between practice sizes and products. To get an accurate calculation of how much an EHR will cost your practice, you'll need to account for Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), which includes a greater number of variables than simply implementation and licensing software.

TCO for Hosted Software

Many EHR vendors provide software in client-server form. Client-server refers to a technology architecture in which computers around your office (clients) access data, processing, and other applications from another computer (the server) that acts as a repository for different functionality. Client-server architecture can also be referred to as on-premise or hosted software.

This type of installation is traditionally viewed as more expensive because it includes capital purchases as well as added personnel, either inside the office or through a third party.

Notable Products > ON PREMISE



AllScripts



Epic



Cerner

TCO for Cloud-Based EHRs

While a client-server model requires providers to create their own IT infrastructure to support the EHR platform, cloud-based EHRs are hosted remotely by the vendor, allowing the physician to access the system through a web-based portal, or through a mobile application. Consequently, cloud-based EHRs have less factors to consider during the buying process, since providers don't have to purchase hardware or consider hiring an in-house IT expert.

While there are significantly less factors for cloud-based EHRs, that doesn't necessarily mean the TCO will be lower than an on-premise solution. Certainly the up-front costs will be less, but the monthly payments for the recurring subscription model may actually exceed the total cost of setting up a hosted solution after five years. Another consideration

comes in the form of support: cloud-based EHRs may be more hands off in the implementation process, while on-premise vendors often send an implementation team to your practice.

Notable Products > CLOUD-BASED



athenaClinical



Practice Fusion



Kareo

On-Premise EHR

Software

- ▶ Licensing

Hardware

- ▶ Server (may need to be replaced in 3-5 years)
- ▶ Additional firmware (desktops/laptops)
- ▶ Possible Wi-Fi installation or bandwidth upgrade

Support

- ▶ Software upgrades
- ▶ Support fees (varies by vendor, some are free, others charge)
- ▶ In-house or third party IT support

Services

- ▶ Implementation
- ▶ Customization
- ▶ Training

Cloud-Based EHR

Software

- ▶ Monthly subscription

Services

- ▶ Implementation

Hardware

- ▶ Wi-Fi or bandwidth upgrades
- ▶ Additional firmware (desktops/laptops)

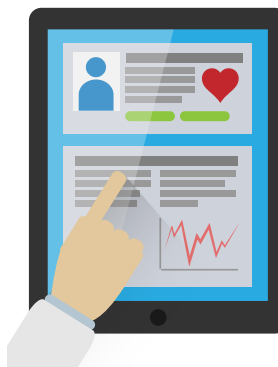
Specialty

When Black Book Rankings conducted their 2013 survey of the EHR market, they found that of the physicians who planned on switching EHRs, 77 percent reported that their current EHR was not well suited to their practice specialty.² With the much vaunted transition to patient-centered medical homes, many EHRs were initially designed for primary care physicians, which actually lead to too much functionality for specialists rather than too little.

Specialists often have a narrow diagnosis set, lab orders, and medications, so they require less options for templates within the system. However, specialists are divided on how narrow they want the EHR charting features to be. Some specialists would prefer a totally blank page, while other providers prefer more customizable templates that allow them to adjust the clinical flow in the EHR to the patient population patterns in their practice.

Choosing an EHR that includes templates for your specialty is ideal, though even these options will no doubt need tweaking. However, considering vendor viability is an important counterbalance to choosing a niche EHR. You don't want to choose a company without the resources to survive new Meaningful Use criteria or ICD-10 implementation.

A middle ground is to choose an EHR with heavy customization capabilities, and work with their support team to structure the templates to your



specific requirements. If you're in a multi-specialty practice, consider forming a committee that includes practitioners of each specialty that will handle the buying process. Also make sure that the clinical

decision support functionality fits the best practices set forth by your specialty society.

Specialty EHRs in Use

Jackson County Psychological Services serves both public and alternative schools, with over 100 providers servicing both children and adult patients. The majority of JCPS's clients receive reimbursement from Medicaid and Medicare, and JCPS also utilizes grants available through the public school system. With such a large provider based, not to mention a custom CPT billing code, it made sense for JCPS to find a scalable way to manage their health records.

Jackson County Psychological Services chose to partner with PIMSY, a behavioral health EHR system, to help better manage their 600 bill codes. Instead of sifting through hundreds of paper files, JCPS can now download, print, and email detailed invoices to their clients with just a few clicks.

While this was a unique case – PIMSY was built to the specifications of JCPS – it does show the potential ROI of finding an EHR that aligns with the needs

of your practice. Since implementing PIMSY, JCPS has increased its number of practices, services, and providers. PIMSY has also contributed to maintaining JCPS's credentialing, and increasing the efficiency of their claims.

Finally, PIMSY has helped JCPS receive reimbursements 50 percent faster and at a 50 percent lower denial rate.

Notable Products > **CUSTOMIZATION**



MediTouch



Greenway



e-MDs



eClinicalWorks



Vitera

Patient Portals

An increasingly important part of Meaningful Use, choosing an EHR with an integrated patient portal is becoming an industry standard. Stage 2 of Meaningful Use requires providers have at least 5 percent of their patients view, download, or transmit health information, actions for which patient portals are well positioned. Additionally, providers must implement reminders for follow-up visits and identify relevant educational material for more than 10 percent of patients with two or more office visits in the preceding two years.

Suffice it to say, patient portals are becoming an integral tool for healthcare practices. A 2012 KLAS survey showed that 57 percent of providers already had a patient portal in place. And the access provided by these online applications matters to patients, too. 41 percent of patients confirmed they would consider switching providers to gain more complete access to their health information.⁶

Patient portals come in two varieties: integrated and third party. Third party options typically feature more robust functionality and greater interoperability functions, but recent market research has shown them losing ground to integrated solutions. This trends shows – unsurprisingly – that providers want to juggle fewer relationships with IT vendors, which means EHR buyers are increasingly opting for patient portals that are already integrated with their current EHR platform.

Notable Products > PATIENT PORTALS



AllScripts

MyChart

Epic MyCharts

NEXTGEN™

NextGen

Voice Dictation

Entering data through a rigid structure like point and click can decrease productivity, and lead to frustration with your EHR software. For certain specialties that see a narrow range of diagnosis, a point and click system may suffice for completing this part of the patient chart due to the repetitive nature of the data. For primary care physicians or internists seeing a wide variety of patients, point and click is less effective.

A common solution to the point and click conundrum can be found in voice dictation software. Dominated by the speech recognition software Dragon NaturallySpeaking, voice dictation can save physicians a significant amount of time, in some cases over an hour a day.⁷ In fact, Black Book Rankings' latest study found that 93 percent of responding physicians would like to enhance their current EHR with voice recognition capabilities, or find a new one with this function.²

If you're interested in medical dictation technology, it's important to purchase an EHR that integrates with Dragon, or that features native voice recognition functionality.

Voice Dictation in Use

The Middle Tennessee Center for Lung Disease knew that digitizing their medical records could improve patient care and increase patient volume. However, after implementing an electronic medical record system, the staff and physicians struggled to integrate the new EHR processes into their workflow. In particular, physicians found entering dictation notes via typing and point- and- click methods particularly difficult.

Half a month on, Middle Tennessee Lung decided to implement speech recognition software, so they reached out to Entrada, a developer of voice recognition applications for EHRs. After augmenting their EHR with voice recognition, the practice saw a significant reduction in report turnaround time and a first draft errors. Middle Tennessee Lung's practice manager estimates that using voice dictation in conjunction with their EHR cut the time spent on administrative tasks related to clinical documentation by 75 percent.⁸

Notable Products > VOICE DICTATION



Amazing Charts



**athenaHealth
(Entrada)**



MediTouch

Integrated Practice Management and Billing

Many practices have been using practice management software for their scheduling and billing long before they thought about investing in an electronic medical records platform. Similar to patient portals, the market trend is now to look for a vendor that offers both an EHR as well as a practice management system.

Particularly for workflow purposes, integrating a practice management system with your EHR can be beneficial, specifically during the charge entry phase of the practice workflow. When a PM system is not integrated with an EHR, the patient information must be transferred manually between systems, which increases the likelihood of errors and omissions. Contrastingly, an integrated PM system automates this process and reduces the likelihood of human error.

Another benefit of selecting an integrated PM solution lies in the elimination of internal interoperability issues. When you use PM and EHR systems from different vendors, you run the risk of the two systems not interfacing properly, which can lead to lost data and mistakes.

Notable Products > PRACTICE MANAGEMENT



Vitera



athenaClinicals



e-MDs



eClinicalWorks

Mobile

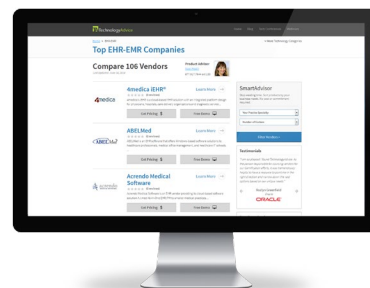
Updating an EHR in the presence of a patient can be distracting for both the physician and patient. Patients feel less engaged and therefore less satisfied, and physicians feel frustrated that their new system is actually slowing their clinical workflow rather than streamlining it. In response, mobile accessibility to EHRs has become a huge factor in physician purchasing decisions, so much so that a Vitera Healthcare survey reported that 91 percent of physicians are interested in mobile EHR access,⁹ and Black Book Rankings found that 100 percent of physicians shopping for a new EHR required mobile access from their new system.

Though the term mobile may initially invoke images of a smartphone, the small screen size severely limits the potential utility to physicians. Physicians are more often turning to tablets to access their EHR, with 51 percent of physicians currently using tablets.¹⁰

Find an EHR For Your Practice

Now that you've got a grasp on the major buying points for an electronic health record system, it's time to compare your options. At TechnologyAdvice, we've researched over 100 EHR vendors, so we can quickly match you with several vendors that fit your specific needs. You can use our online research tool, the SmartAdvisor, to sort through our database and find products that match your criteria, or call one of our product specialists and get a free consultation.

Both options save you hours – if not days – of research, and help you find a solution that actually works for you.



Have Questions?

Our team of experts is ready to help!

877.917.7644

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