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To: Administrators

Success of Electronic Health Records Depends on Social Reengineering

Benefits of Electronic Health Record System

As we see the nationwide consolidation of private practices, hospitals are looked to as model for healthcare infrastructure. Hospitals are seeing huge push toward electronic health record (EHR) systems. The adoption rates have nearly tripled, since the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH Act) of 2010. This act, which authorized government-funded incentive payments, works to address many of the existing barriers for EHR adoption. In working towards eliminating duplication, redundancy, and fragmentation, these systems provide great value when implemented well. Electronic health records combine data, knowledge, and technology efficiency for a potential increase in providing value care. In addition to the implementation of EHRs, customization and social reengineering must occur according to population and social barriers specific to each healthcare system.

Barriers and Implementation

The simple adoption of an EHR system, however, does not guarantee improvements in value. There include many environmental and social barriers that affect the outcome of adoption, which must be taken into account. The following improvements must be made:

- More customized picking of electronic system for population – Demographics and stability of the population differ and affect the success of each system.
- Infrastructure improvement for secure health information exchange – Because of the lack of infrastructure, health systems must take the initiative for the establishment of safe private exchange.
- Social reengineering – This includes physician-patient interactions and patient involvement.

Some of these barriers in implementation are addressed with the incentive and support provided by the HITECH Act of 2010. Incentives of about $40,000 and greater are rewarded to health systems that achieve meaningful use of EHR programs. This meaningful use is what is evaluated based on national standards based on three levels with the ultimate goal to produce better patient outcome. Another goal of HITECH is to create strong infrastructure for information exchange between patient and provider to bolster a trust in the EHR system, as well as working to create a network of health systems able to advise discrentional choosing of a customized EHR.

Healthcare systems across the country are seeing a shift to electronic record systems, and some have seen more success than others based on the various implementation methods. Models such as the Geisinger Health System EHR model have successfully achieved the meaningful use of an EHR. This EHR model has been designed solely by the Geisinger Health System to cater to its specific patient population.

Implications for future EHR Improvement and Meaningful Use

With the meaningful use of EHRs depending on customization of the model to population and social interactions, social reengineering must take place. Adoption of an electronic system is no small change, and the reengineering must complement this
change. There is a need for increased education and training in order for the successful implementation toward seeing meaningful use of EHRs. The education of the future should be more evidence-based and with a large increase in adoption nationwide, failed and successful, this will be increasingly possible.

For more information:
