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Electronic Health Records Open Up New Opportunities



Talk of electronic medical records (EMR) and electronic health records (EHR) is a hot topic. These systems assist medical practitioners in the creation, storage, and organization of electronic medical records, including patient charts, electronic prescriptions, lab orders, evaluations, and patient communications, to name just a few common features. While the terms EMR and EHR are often used interchangeably, EMR solutions allow for patient information to be shared within

one healthcare organization, whereas EHR solutions, which replace paper-based patient record systems, allow for health-related records to be shared across multiple organizations.

A recent CMI/Compas whitepaper reported that according to research by Medscape in 2012, 74% of physicians responded yes when asked if they are currently using an EHR system. The same study reports that the current EHR market is very fragmented, with most suppliers having less than 10% market share. It is predicted that there will be consolidation across the more than 300 EHR vendors; some will be acquired for list acquisition purposes while the high cost of business will lead to some smaller platforms going away.

EHR adoption is being driven by The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act of 2009, which provides financial incentives to be paid to providers who use EHRs in a substantial and meaningful way to manage patient care. This is referred to as Meaningful Use and is being rolled out in stages with each stage introducing stricter requirements for EHR adherence. By 2015, hospitals and doctors will be subject to financial penalties under Medicare if they are not using EHRs.

Experts and analysts alike agree that as the industry moves into Meaningful Use II, things will start to get interesting. There are additional requirements around patient access to and communication within EHR platforms. These include providing an InfoButton to patient education, secure communications, allowing patients to view their records, and providing reminders to patients.

CMI/Compas believes that increased engagement by the patient will improve efficiency, documentation, patient satisfaction, and adherence. Furthermore, they say this will lead to an increase in patient portals, which offer an opportunity for enhanced physician-patient communica-

This month's Forum discusses the opportunities and challenges of EHR in the coming months and years. Some optimists in the industry believe that EHRs will provide pharma companies with another method for messaging physicians at the point of care, while skeptics believe pharma will have to take a back seat until all the evolving pieces of the Affordable Care Act are in place, and the healthcare industry in its entirety has mastered the function of EHRs.

In either scenario, there are opportunities for pharmaceutical companies and their partners to connect with patients, pardon the pun, in a much more meaningful way.



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Their Word...

DENISE MYSHKO



Pharmaceutical companies are looking to big data tools and social media for better,

faster trial recruitment.

ROBIN ROBINSON



EHRs represent another channel to provide physician and patient education, but how the industry can effectively

do that is still in question.

KIM RIBBINK



Pharmaceutical companies are finding success in Malaysia thanks to

growing government support, good infrastructure, and a trusted manufacturing environment.

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