GRM

HOW HITECH ACT IMPACTS EMR MIGRATION

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"We are drowning in information but starved for knowledge."
- John Naisbitt

Choosing the proper EMR solution for your practice is a challenging process that has been made even more challenging by the requirements of the HITECH Act. Even more distressing, it has changed the primary focus from choosing the solution that best fits your needs to choosing the solution that will most likely provide stimulus reimbursement funds. We say "most likely" because the funds are anything but guaranteed. Remember they are paid out over a period of 5 years and only as a percentage of allowable Medicare (or Medicaid) charges and only if you can show "meaningful use" consistent with the legislation's definition of that term.

If you have been following the debate surrounding the implementation of Electronic Medical Records systems, you may have noticed a gradual, reversal in tone. All the early stories spoke of a glorious future where EMR technology made every medical practitioner's job easier and saved huge sums of money in the process. But in more recent months, study after study has shown that most EMR installations fail to provide cost savings. Moreover, the majority of these installations are so cumbersome and problematic, they are under-utilized or not employed at all.

While this may seem surprising, change, especially when it impacts an entire organization, is almost always far more difficult to implement than to imagine. Inevitably, it takes longer, costs more and succeeds less than anyone would anticipate.

A BETTER ALTERNATIVE

As an alternative to setting up an onsite EMR system, consider an EMR-compatible Electronic Document Management solution. This solution lowers upfront expenditures, delivers immediate benefits and keeps you eligible for the top level of Medicare reimbursement, all regardless of which HITECH path you ultimately choose.

With Electronic Document Management, you can convert your active paper medical charts to a system that streamlines chart management and consistently delivers increased physician/provider productivity, the very area where EMRs come up short.

The thinking, performance and inherent benefits behind Electronic Document Management are rooted in the following value-related rationales:

- An outcome is preferable over uncertainty.
- A dollar of real savings, today is worth more than a dollar of potential savings in the future.
- Where rewards are similar, it is better to choose lower risk than higher risk.
- Solutions that are simple, rather than complex , have a greater chance of acceptance and success.
- Time is money.

Electronic Document Management adheres to the above principles through an outsourced, web-based, on-demand, hosted system that features substantial SaaS (Software as a Service) benefits. GRM's EDM, for instance, stores and retrieves data with state-of-the art efficiency, security and reliability. Clients such as your organization benefit without the expense of designing, maintaining, supporting, upgrading and learning an on-premise system.

Consider the best and worst cases of HITECH EMR system implementation, and you'll see how Electronic Document Management is a much better way to go, no matter what your organization's plans may be for the future.

HITECH Best Case Scenario — The government has provided a solid list of certified EMR software applications, the definition of "meaningful use" is clear and funding is available. You evaluate, purchase and implement a certified EMR application, train your staff on its use, convert all relevant medical charts to electronic records, ensure that all medical practitioners follow and document all guidelines provided in the "meaningful use" documentation. In this case, over a period of five years, you receive the maximum incentives paid by HITECH and the upfront investment in your EMR solution is eventually repaid.

The downside here is that the vast majority of studies show that the greatest cost comes from losses in physician/provider productivity, not in the expense of purchasing or implementing the EMR solution itself.

In every study of EMR installation the simplest, earliest, greatest and most consistent way to gain efficiency is to automate the retrieval and management of medical charts. Though a full-blown EMR solution provides vastly greater functionality, that functionally does not appear to improve productivity or reduce costs. But Electronic Document Management does. Electronic Document Management is proven to increase, rather than lower physician/provider productivity. HITECH Worst Case Scenario— There are problems in some or all areas of certification, meaningful use and funding. Consequently, while you incur all the costs to evaluate, purchase and implement an EMR solution, you do not receive any HITECH incentives from the government. Also, failing to show "meaningful use," reduces your

Medicare reimbursements with a 2% decrease in 2015 that rises to a 3%-5% decrease in 2018 and beyond.

Electronic Document Management, on the other hand, eliminates the need for upfront hardware/software purchases as well as the costs of maintaining, upgrading and training. Because it is a SaaS pay-as-you-go system, you can realize immediate benefits and more likely quality for "meaningful use" Medicare reimbursements without risking a large, upfront capital expenditure.

Of course, there is a third possibility, that of making no investment in EMR Technology While this choice does not require any additional investment or effort, you will be subject to the aforementioned reductions in Medicare reimbursements. Also, your organization's current aggregate chart management costs, with no Electronic Document Management implemented, will remain the same. All in all, you will continue to incur all the costs of your existing system with no additional benefits.

So, given the less-than-stellar record of EMRs and the prospect of staying with current systems that become increasingly problematic to manage, your healthcare organization can either budget more money to cover the cost of future change or reject change and continue to pay current built-in costs. Or, as we suggest, you can opt for the immediate benefits, EMR compatibility and little or no upfront expense of Electronic Document Management.

Electronic Document Management can make your charts instantly available online from anywhere at any time. Instead of Xeroxing, faxing or shipping Fed Ex, in many cases, it all becomes as simple as sending and receiving email.

True to the rationales behind its development, here is a review of how Electronic Document Management can provide your healthcare organization with immediate benefits that far exceed the implementation of an on-premise EMR system.

- An outcome is preferable over uncertainty.
- Electronic Document Management solutions have a proven track record of providing a high Return on Investment, with many Software as a Service solutions showing a positive ROI in under 1 year. Conversely, EMRs have a 50% de-installation rate, with most showing a negative ROI even after 3 years.
- A dollar of real savings today is worth more than a dollar of potential savings in the future.
- Moving your charts into an EDM system can improve the productivity of your staff in both the short and long term. The sooner solutions are in place, the greater the savings.
- Where rewards are similar, it is better to choose lower risk than higher risk.
- As provided by GRM, EDM is Software as a Service, meaning you can experience the benefits of Electronic Document Management without purchasing any hardware or software. You can also have a complete solution implemented in days. With high upfront costs, implementation

time measured in months to a year and a de-installation rate of 50% you almost can't find a more risky business technology investment than EMR.

- Solutions that are simple, rather than complex, have a greater chance of acceptance and success.
- A document management system delivered over the web can be learned in under 15 minutes for most users without the need to download or install software. It doesn't get much simpler than that.
- Time is money.
- Electronic Document Management provides convenient time-saving accessibility from any web browser. It's speed and efficiency virtually eliminates the time-consuming loss or misplacement of documents. And because the system is highly intuitive, it can be learned quickly with little training.

No matter how you look at it, Electronic Document Management really is the least risky, least costly and potentially most beneficial, most profitable, most open-ended solution to meeting HITECH EMR-related requirements.

EDM is available from GRM as part of our innovative integrated solutions designed to transform hardcopy/electronic hybrid, siloed environments into cohesive, accurate, accessible and compliant electronic patient data systems.

GRM's full-cycle Information Management Suite includes components such as secure, offsite storage facilities, Scan-on-Request, 24/7 Flexible Pickups and Deliveries, the Blended Solution bridge from a hard copy to digital environment and the EDM Online Health Record Center. This total lifecycle approach enables and enhances the automation of numerous healthcare workflow processes. Throughout, GRM works in partnership with your organization to design, develop and apply records and information standards and practices that best serve the realistic needs of your day-to-day operations.

MORE ABOUT GRM

GRM Document Management is a leading provider of lifecycle records and information management solutions. The company brings proprietary innovation, blended integration and new levels of cost efficiency to document storage, data protection, digital/electronic document management and certified destruction. With over 24 years of experience, GRM has earned the trust and continued business of more than 5,000 customers—large and small, domestic and multinational—representing a wide range of industries. Clients are served from state-of-the-art, climate-controlled facilities in major U.S. markets and internationally throughout China.