

# Chiropractic Office Managers

June 16, 2011

## EHR, How is it going and is it worth it?

After my last "TIPs" E-Newsletter resending my article on Electronic Health Records, I received responses from chiropractors expressing their experience with purchasing and implementing new EHR software and the hardware needed.

To start, physicians who were able to attest to their compliance with the meaningful use requirements of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services began receiving Medicare electronic health record (EHR) incentive payments last month. That means, as much as, \$18,000.00 in annual incentive payments with a maximum of \$44,000.00 if you begin by 2012.

## Sounds good?

Well, what is happening is that there may be some practices that are finding the experience of getting new EHR software up and running is more expensive and in some cases may overshadow the incentive payment.

One chiropractor expressed to me her experience with EHR that she started 18 months ago has been wonderful. She currently employs two and a half employees--seeing an average of 150 to 175 patients a week. **One year ago**, after what she thought was careful investigation, she purchased an EHR system for more than \$21,000, which included new hardware. There was also the time factor to consider. She spent over 80 hours selecting the vendor and then another 80 hours of initial training of her staff. During the EHR implementation period, her practice dropped as she and the office staff became involved in learning to use the new system.

**Six months** after implementing the original system, she was notified by her software vendor that the system was being acquired by another company. This meant that the new vendor's products would not support her current network platform and essentially, she was back to square one.

She is now looking at a new system that will cost in excess of \$17,000, with \$4,000 in annual consulting fees. It will come out of her business cash reserves. **It's not just the additional financial investment.** She will also have to take time away from my practice to implement and train her entire staff on this new system.

I hope you can learn from her experience. Not every clinic has or will face these problems and I don't want to tell you that it is not worth it.

In the long run, it all will come down to addressing these unexpected expenses to make sure practices remain viable as they adopt EHRs--and continue to provide care to their patients.

As I have been saying for the past 9 months, doctors, this is not free money. This is part of the stimulus package and you may use it and more to complete the requirement. My advice is to move slowly, ask a lot of questions, cover your back to protect your investment and determine if it is worth the **money and time**.

Go to my website to better understand EHR, the incentive payments and how this voluntary incentive program works.

[http://www.iccom.org/index\\_files/Page2383.html](http://www.iccom.org/index_files/Page2383.html)

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