Ease EHR replacement worries and succeed

5 Barriers to EHR Replacement

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About the author:

Gary Wietecha, M.D. has over 18 years’ experience in deploying EHR systems into large medical groups, coordinating EHR transitions, and conducting EHR workflow consulting.

As Director of Clinical Product Management at NextGen Healthcare, he coordinates clinical review of the NextGen® Ambulatory EHR and, most recently, was an integral team member in developing the MU2 and ICD-10 ready version of the EHR, not only ensuring that requirements were met, but that they were done so within the natural workflow for the physician.
Replacing your current EHR is no easy undertaking. But it’s becoming a common trend, with about half of all providers currently unsatisfied with their EHR.

The top five roadblocks that hold most practices back from a much-needed EHR replacement are: cost concerns, data conversion worries, fears about losing productivity, re-training angst, and hesitation to go through another implementation.

Within these pages, we’ll provide a deeper understanding of those roadblocks and how they are holding practices like yours back from success. You’ll receive some guidance about how to lessen the negative impact of these concerns and learn to get yourself in the right frame of mind and on the right path forward.

So, stay calm and get energized! Because, if you’re reading this, you’re likely on the replacement path for a reason and this eBook will help make your EHR replacement as productive and painless as possible.
Haven’t you spent enough money already?
Tough to tackle

This is probably the toughest barrier to tackle... the one that hits your bottom line. So let’s not beat around the bush and address this right away.

Concern over EHR replacement costs can keep you up at night, but the benefits on the other side of replacement will make it all worthwhile. In fact, after a successful EHR replacement, many practices have acknowledged that the risk of doing nothing far outweighed the risk (and costs) of replacement.

So, how can you take the first step, while keeping cost-related nightmares at bay?

Analyze what you are missing today versus what you will get after the transition. This gap analysis will keep you focused on the results you will achieve, rather than cost.

Ask yourself some difficult questions.
What’s currently working in your EHR—and what must change? What is essential versus nice to have?

Does your current system adequately support your Meaningful Use (MU) goals? Will your EHR be ready for ICD-10? These questions help you zero in on what’s really important to you.

Create a detailed list of requirements so you can focus your search on a limited number of vendors that will fit your unique needs. This exercise also shows you whether the anticipated benefits for your practice outweigh the risks.

Write down a transition plan so that you know the money it’s going to take, and how you can best apply your dollars to move your practice forward. What does your prospective vendor offer versus what you can do for yourself? How can you re-assign costs?
An EHR that pays for itself?

One way to offset the cost of a new EHR is to outsource your Revenue Cycle Management (RCM) needs. RCM services such as billing, collections, and claims management can help you significantly improve your bottom line by fixing revenue leaks, addressing payment delays, and enabling effective and profitable business operations. In addition, by outsourcing your central billing office and receivables management, you get a predictable, cost-effective payment model—and can focus your efforts on patient care, not operational challenges.

Whichever technology partner you choose for your EHR or RCM services, you need one that can prove it’s ready for change and not playing catch-up. If you end up with a vendor that isn’t able to respond to industry demands, you’ll see this theme play out in future projects. So, be ready for MU, ICD-10, and future regulatory demands by choosing a vendor that’s already proven it’s ready at each new turn. This way, you’ll be able to give yourself the most time possible to prepare for regulations and changes.

In the end, the cost of moving to a new system may not be as high as the cost of staying on a system that doesn’t meet your long-term needs.

Unless you’re a cash pay practice, to play in the game, you need to be using an effective EHR system. The right one makes your life easier every single day—and it’ll be worth every penny.
Training again... Turn a burden into an opportunity!
Now that you understand how EHRs work, it’s important to analyze your current workflow against your new system. Be sure you’re ready to train effectively in your new system and work with your new EHR partner to ensure you cover the critical elements of your workflow.

For example, select specific assessments and ask the vendor to show you how to do them in the new system. See how you’re capturing data in the new EHR and make sure nothing is missing. This way, your clinicians will feel comfortable with their workflows and confident that they’re getting the most from their training experience.

Another round of EHR training doesn’t have to be that painful, especially if you have the right attitude and approach.
Am I going to lose all of my data!?
Worry about ensuring that your data transfers accurately and easily into your new EHR is another big barrier that holds practices back from making the change.

When moving from one EHR to another, it’s important to bring over only what’s necessary and leave behind what’s not. Think of it as an opportunity to analyze and “clean up” your data. Figure out what you need to convert as discrete data elements versus what can appear as a scanned-in item in the new record.

There are many ways to accomplish this process. But you need to think through your approach to get it right. Some points to remember:

You’re going to need to keep a copy of the old system for a while.

Before you go live, do conversion testing and be sure it works.

Let your new EHR partner lead you in this process by telling you how it works and advising you on what to do.

If you and your new EHR partner follow the right steps, your data will be safe and available after your EHR replacement. Plus, you’ll get a rare chance to fully analyze and clean your data.

Your EHR partner has done this before, so lean on them.

See, there’s always a bright side.
Rally your troops for another implementation.
Preparation and leadership are key

It’s all in the preparation. From front desk staff, to billing coordinators, to clinicians; all parts of the team need to be involved. It takes time, effort, dedication, and willpower to rally your staff for another implementation—and that takes strong leadership at the executive level.

Some pointers:

Give your staff time to adjust to the idea of an EHR switch. Don’t blindside them with another EHR implementation, especially if they felt surprised the first time around. It’s important that your implementation plans are transparent and communicated well in advance.

Let your staff be part of the decision and the process. Do this WITH your staff, not TO them.

Be flexible when it comes to training and education—busy clinicians may already be feeling strapped for time. Be considerate and flexible.

When it comes to your patients, they should know there’s a process going on. Be honest. You may need to ask them for updated information—or to sign up for a new Portal. Highlight the benefits of the new system for your patients. You don’t want patients to be concerned. There shouldn’t be any surprises.

As long as you have a conversion plan in place before the switch, you can reassure patients that their data is safe—and reassure your staff that the EHR switch will benefit them, your practice, and your patients.
Minimize productivity losses.
The good news is that many providers ramp up faster with a replacement EHR than they did during their initial implementation.

Careful preparation is the best way to prevent a significant drop in productivity—and its associated financial impact—after your EHR goes live.

### Ensure staff readiness
- Make sure your staff is comfortable with your new workflow, interface, and technical requirements—and that your software meets the majority of their demands.
- If possible, clear your administrative backlogs before go-live so your billing, scheduling, and coding staffs have a clean slate.
- Take time to practice, practice, practice—learn to use the new system and build out functionality and pick lists before go-live.
- Ensure EHR experts are on hand to answer questions and give a quick tutorial when needed.

### Extract data up to a month in advance
- Extract information from your old EHR up to a month ahead of time, before go-live on the new EHR. Use your upgrade processes as an opportunity to become proficient in the new system without having patients in front of you.

### Create mitigation plans
- Plan for the loss of productivity and come up with mitigation plans to overcome it.

All the workflows you collected during training will come into play here. Your vendor should be at the ready to help you because they see where people may falter every single day—and can help prevent it.

### Open up communication
- Encourage staff to make complaints known and give them a chance to show your EHR replacement team the roadblocks.
- Make it clear that, while you can’t smooth over every rough spot, you hear staff concerns and understand them.

Replacing your EHR is a great opportunity to “re-engineer,” or better yet “RIGHT-engineer,” processes within your office. This way, you’re working smarter with your EHR. For example, if you previously put your “paper world” into your EHR, now you have the chance to right-engineer the process. You have lessons learned behind you—and the chance to clean the slate and do it the right way this time around.
Get better results, period.

By tackling these 5 barriers head on, you can get through your replacement project and get back to sleeping soundly—without EHR nightmares!

Here at NextGen Healthcare, we’ve already helped hundreds of practices make the switch. If you are in “EHR replacement mode,” contact us. Our experts can help you ease the process and provide a solution to meet your needs today and in the future.

NextGen® Ambulatory EHR is easy to use, intelligent, integrated, and interoperable! And the way it supports individual physician workflow is very intuitive. So you can work faster, share data, and coordinate care. Plus, it’s ONC Certified*. Take a sneak peek here.

To learn more about our results-proven solutions, including special EHR replacement options, contact us at EHResults@nextgen.com or Call 855.510.6398.