

Benefits of EHR Adoption & AeHN's Regional Extension Center (REC)

While many of the AeHN education and outreach activities have focused on the *meaningful use* of EHRs, we often receive questions from primary care practices such as - "Why should I invest in an EHR"?

"Improvements in quality of care, patient satisfaction, and operations are often experienced the first year of EHR use. As a trusted resource offering third-party objectivity, AeHN's Regional Extension Center (REC) can help to determine your practice's readiness for EHR adoption and address questions", says Jim Landon, AeHN's REC Director.

EHR Use is Like Learning a New Sport — Practice Pays Off

At first, learning something new takes time and effort; over time you learn the shortcuts and eventually experience the benefits. That's how it is with EHR use. After fully embracing EHRs, many practices report a financial return on investment.

The degree to which providers experience these benefits is in direct proportion to how extensively they use the EHR (not paper) for as many of their daily tasks as possible; even greater benefits will be realized when the EHR can be fully integrated into a network of providers through Alaska's health information exchange.

EHRs Can Dramatically Improve Quality of Care

- Even basic EHR use can have a significant positive impact on the practice. Take e-prescribing, which allows the provider to reduce the incidence of errors by responding to drug interactions and drug allergy alerts. You also improve communications and reduce duplication and errors by ordering referrals and lab tests electronically.
- EHRs allow providers to keep a closer watch on chronic patients. The EHR will allow you to generate reports that show which patients have not had appropriate lab work, wellness exam or flu shot.
- The EHR acts as a safety net for patients with a history of problems. Take patients with hypertension; their charts can be coded and automatically placed into a hypertension registry. Should a planned follow up not happen, the computer system will alert you to take action.

The Greatest Financial Benefits Come From Better Coding and Documentation

- Financial benefits may come from higher reimbursements since the EHRs decision support templates create more detailed and accurate documentation and coding.
- The integration between billing and EHR software also supports more complete charge captures and reduced charge lags.
- Providers also report reduced dictation costs with EHRs.
- There's also a significant decrease in the volume of paper flowing around and a reduction in clerical work. Providers say these savings have paid for half the cost of the software in the first year.

EHRs Increase Efficiencies and Maximize Provider Workflow and Time

- Initially, EHRs will disrupt your routine; however, further down the road, improvement in practice productivity is often experienced.
- With the reduction in paper, eventually providers will have to decide what to do with all the space they had for chart storage rooms and billing offices—like adding more examining rooms.
- EHRs eliminate double and triple handling of patient forms, repetitive dictation, manual note-taking, and streamline patient-related administrative tasks which improve efficiencies such as: Chart pulls, filing and finding paperwork;

managing prescriptions and refills; reviewing phone messages and new documents; following up on tests and referrals; transcribing.

- EHRs offer real-time processing of information, which facilitates communication within the practice, with patients, and with consulting providers.

Providers Report Positive Feedback When They Use EHRs During Visits

- During the office visit, providers enjoy the benefits of more complete information and more opportunities for patient involvement. Patients like their doctors to have access to all their information and appreciate seeing their medical information on the computer screen.
- This enhanced communication helps patients understand the meaning of their data and fosters post-visit compliance with medical instructions.
- Increased patient satisfaction often results which can enhance practice reputation and create a competitive advantage that can lead to higher patient volume.

AeHN's REC - Specifically Created to Meet Medical Practices' Technological Needs

Why should providers enroll in the REC? What are the unique selling points and assistance they will receive as compared to other consultant organizations?

- Providers in Alaska should use REC services because they will receive a steep discount for high quality services that are provided through a trustworthy, objective, not-for-profit organization that was specifically created to meet the technological needs of providers.
- Public and Private funding sources including federal subsidies enable the REC to offer a steeply-discounted, annual enrollment fee of only \$100 per FTE primary care provider. For this \$100 enrollment fee Alaskan primary care providers get up to \$3,000 in practice services which include:
 - EHR Readiness Assessment
 - Selecting an EHR & Contracting with Vendor
 - Work Flow Design / Re-design
 - Training
 - Implementation Support
 - IT Support (Post-Implementation)
- Connectivity to health information exchange services (included in membership) such as access to health data from other providers which include:
 - Composite Record Viewing
 - Master Patient Index / Record Locator Service
 - Secure Messaging
 - Audit/Privacy & Security
 - Personal Health Record
 - Public Health Reporting
- Contact to enroll in Alaska's REC:
 - Jim Landon, REC Director @ (866) 966-9030 ext. 4, jim@ak-ehealth.org or visit www.ak-ehealth.org