

EHR BUYER'S GUIDE

Know what features you need

Know what they're selling

Know what questions to ask

A comprehensive handbook on what to consider when shopping for the EHR software that best meets your practice's needs.

EMR/EHR Buyer's Guide

Any investment in electronic health records (EHR) software comes with the reasonable expectation that it saves time and money, improve clinical decisions, and increases convenience, interoperability and efficiencies for yourself, your staff and your patients.

Problems, however, arise when expectations and reality don't align – when you discover the EHR software you purchased is difficult to navigate, lacks adequate vendor support or doesn't do everything you assumed it would.

Unfortunately, by the time you figure this out, it's usually too late. You're already contractually and financially committed – but you'd hardly be alone in this regret. Consider this: Although 86 percent of U.S. physician offices are currently plugged into one EHR system or another, a recent survey by the Deloitte consulting firm found that 90 percent of respondents would make changes to their current systems.

That is, it wasn't everything they thought it would be.

Why is that?

At least in part, it's because decisions are often made without fully considering how – or if – a particular software program meets the specific needs of their practice or specialty. And because they didn't ask all the right questions, such as: Can the software be customized? Is it interoperable? Does it include an integrated patient portal to streamline communication, scheduling, referrals, telehealth, e-prescribing and billing?

There's value in knowing what to look for, what questions to ask, and what distinguishes one system from another because *not all EHR systems are the same*. They are not one-size-fits-all.

In the end, informed decisions lead to smart investments, and smart investments lead to long-term, cost-saving, stress-reducing continuity with a reliable EHR system that checks all your boxes.

If you're in the market for new EHR software, there's a lot to know and consider. It can seem like a daunting task. But done smartly, you'll never have to do it again.

To help you find the best EHR software for your medical practice, we offer this EHR Buyer's Guide that highlights the most important features to look for – and questions to ask – during your shop-and-compare, decision-making process.



MOBILE-FRIENDLY, CLOUD-BASED SOFTWARE

The advantages of mobile-friendly, cloud-based software to your medical practice boil down to cost savings, convenience, accessibility, and its flexibility to grow and adapt as your practice evolves. Its value to practices sharply increased during the COVID crisis, when telemedicine, mobile-device usage and working remotely all became necessary components of patient care. Key features include:

Mobile-friendly: The magic of cloud-based software is that you can access your system *anywhere, anytime, and on any device*. This includes smartphones, laptops, PCs, tablets, etc. No longer tethered to an on-site server with onsite-only access, the cloud-based system increases office efficiency by enabling providers to work virtually from anywhere. All you need is an Internet connection.

Flexible pricing model: Typically, cloud-based systems allow for more flexible pricing models. Options include financing, purchasing or subscribing. The advantage of financing and/or purchasing is the Section 179 tax break you'll get for reinvesting in your practice.

No server upkeep: Server-based systems require their own temp-controlled office space and an internal IT staff dedicated to server management and maintenance. A considerable expense. Maintaining cloud servers, on the other hand, is the complete responsibility of the EHR/PM vendor.

Reduced risks: While servers are vulnerable to unexpected outages, severe weather, natural disasters, and expensive repairs, cloud-based EHR systems are protected in a secure and certified data center.

Scalability: As successful practices expand and add more providers, cloud-based systems can facilitate the ease of that growth by adding user licenses.

FULLY INTEGRATED SOFTWARE

Nothing will save your practice more time than fully integrated medical software that streamlines workflows, simplifies data-entry, reduces errors, and enhances the overall efficiency of your practice.

Consider this: If your EHR system is separate from your practice management software, the time required for data-entry doubles. An integrated system eliminates duplicity and cuts in half the time needed for data-entry. Sparing your staff and yourself the time-wasting trouble of entering the same data twice has its rewards:

- Frees up time to perform core duties at a higher level.
- Enables better focus on patient engagement and care.
- Increases the overall agility of your practice.



Maximized profitability: Eliminating data-entry duplicity decreases the likelihood of costly typos (think coding errors) that could result in underpayments or rejected insurance claims, not to mention time otherwise lost to resolve such mistakes.

Accurate coding, claims: When data is punched into a fully-integrated system, the patient's record can be directly transmitted to billing, thus ensuring cleaner claims – and again, with less risk of human error. The result is a faster turnaround time for collections.

Increased interoperability: Fully integrated systems are inherently interoperable, meaning patient electronic health records from a full spectrum of providers is securely shared among those who need to know. The advantage of this wealth of integrated information is the system's ability to interpret actionable information for providers, thus saving time and money while improving patient outcomes and experiences.

Real-time visibility: In practices with siloed systems and overlapping databases, it's nearly impossible to fully grasp all the moving parts of an organization in real time. Not the case with integrated software applications which provide real-time perspective that can spare you countless, mind-numbing hours of sifting through and segregating the relevant information from the obsolete.

Lower IT expenses: By converting from costly siloed server systems to integrated software applications, IT professionals can turn their focus from routine maintenance and updates to strategic initiatives that actually add to the practice's bottom line.

Patient retention: Common truth in any business: If the customer has a bad experience, they're probably not coming back. And why should they? This underscores the value of fully integrated systems to today's patient experience – ensuring easy access to personal health records, lab results and telehealth services; simplifying check-in, eligibility, patient-provider communication, billing, e-prescribing, referrals, and appointment reminders; and eliminating redundant patient information forms and lab tests. Remember: A happy patient is more likely to return ... and to refer you to others.



HIGHLY CONFIGURABLE TEMPLATES & CUSTOM FORMS

Because no two practices are exactly alike, it's imperative that your EHR software allows you to create templates and forms that expedite data-entry methods specific to your practice. The advantages of these time-saving dynamic forms include:

- Pre-populated data fields
- Real-time changes
- Fields validated for proper formatting
- Automatic verification of patient information such as contact information, credit card numbers and insurance eligibility

Forms and templates also enhance patient-physician engagement by simplifying data-input with fewer clicks during patient assessments.

Not only do these features promote greater practice efficiencies, they also allow you to create more user-friendly software that accelerates the learning process while increasing productivity for you and your staff.

Ultimately, a configurable and customizable system puts your practice in the best possible position to deliver exceptional patient care and optimize productivity.



REPORTING & ANALYTICS

Whether you're composing a report or preparing for a board meeting, there is no more convenient resource for quickly assessing the financial status of your practice than EHR software with high-functioning reporting and analytics.

In a click, the financial health of your practice can be graphically represented at both the macro and micro levels – from big-picture overviews to filtered analytics. In either case, these at-a-glance graphic representations of a practice's financial and performance metrics can be leveraged for:

- Identifying trends in daily operations
- Gap-analysis
- Growth-planning
- Goal setting

Everything from bar charts to line graphs can simplify your assessment of, for example, monthly totals of your practice's patient payments, insurance payments, or total adjustments over the past year. Or they can:

- Break down your Aged Receivable by month – so the billing staff knows whether to focus revenue-collecting efforts on primary insurance, secondary insurance, or patients.
- Identify which providers had the most appointments or were generating the most revenue.
- Indicate your practice's most-used diagnosis codes or CPT codes.

Let's say, for example, you filter data to identify your top-5 denial codes. How helpful would that data be for devising a targeted plan to minimize those denials in the future? And what would minimizing those denials do for future revenue?

A system's value increases with its reporting capacity:

- **State reports**, when configured on your EHR, can be exported in order to upload to a dedicated state reporting resource, thus saving time by eliminating double-entry of data.

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- **Demographic reports** reveal the core of your patient or community population and allow you to focus on healthcare concerns unique to that dominant patient group.

In addition, data collection and reporting for government incentive programs like FQHC, MACRA MIPS, and CCBHC are significantly simplified when consolidated within a single, integrated EHR system. Everything under one umbrella.

MAKING A SWITCH? MAKE A PLAN BEFORE BEGINNING YOUR EHR SEARCH

Let's face it. Nobody wants to switch out their EHR software. It's disruptive and time-consuming - but if you made it this far, it's because you know a change is necessary.

Purchasing EHR software is a big decision, a big commitment, and a big investment. The goal isn't just to get it done. It's to get it done *right* - to find what's right for you and your practice.

The best way to accomplish this? Make a plan. It's an investment in time on the front end that can spare you time and headaches on the back end - and likely yield superior and lasting results.

Need some ideas for your plan? You might begin by asking yourself these three questions:

- **What do I like about my current software?**
- **What *don't* I like about my current software? (Or what is my current software lacking?)**
- **How do I fill the gaps between what I have (and like) and what I need my new EHR software to be?**

Carefully evaluating and enumerating your practice's software priorities empowers you before your search even begins. So, too, does understanding the four integral sectors of EHR:

- **Is it mobile-friendly and cloud-based?**
- **Is it fully integrated?**
- **Does it include configurable templates and custom forms?**
- **And does it include reporting and analytic functionalities?**

Certainly, you'll also have questions about product cost, implementation and security - to name a few - before deciding what to get. For a closer look at how Qualifacts EHR software options can improve efficiencies in your practice, please schedule a video demonstration with one of our experts. To assist you in making a confident and educated decision, we're happy to answer any questions you might have about our own product or about EHR software in general. Whatever you decide, we hope you've found this guide to be helpful and wish you every success as your search begins!