Comparison of stand-alone versus EMR systems

One of the most critical decisions to make early on is whether to implement ePrescribing as a stand-alone system or within an electronic medical record (EMR) system. There are considerable differences between the two options in terms of cost, difficulty of implementation and affects on workflow. The following comparisons should help you evaluate the alternatives.

Factor	Stand-alone ePrescribing system	EMR system with ePrescribing
Cost	• Relatively low • Up to $2,500 per year for licensing and support with potential additional costs for such functions as data integration and enhanced reporting	• Relatively high • Typically from $25,000 to $45,000 per prescriber plus annual operating and maintenance expenses from 12 to 20 percent of initial costs
Difficulty of implementation	• Relatively low • Fewer processes affected • Fewer external integration points • Shorter overall project timelines	• Relatively high • Affects all processes, including billing • Multiple external integration points • Project timelines can be long and labor intensive
Workflow impact	• Relatively low • More subtle, minimally disruptive improvements to current practice workflow • Potential lack of integration with existing practice management systems	• Relatively high • Significant changes to entire operation of practice, including scheduling, billing, lab ordering/receiving, recordkeeping and reporting
Safety benefits to patient	• Significant • Immediate access to patient data specific to prescribing process	• Very significant • Immediate access to all patient data • Broader range of clinical decision support
Impact to productivity during and immediately after implementation	• Relatively low • 1–3 months to maximize efficiency	• Relatively high • 9–12 months to maximize efficiency

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