
It Takes a Village

By Julie Loomis, RN, JD

Electronic Health Records offer the potential for vast improvement in continuity of care, legibility and accurate recordkeeping. However, to most practitioners, that goal seems light years away. This is due to many factors out of the user's control such as technology, design and integration issues. The good news is there are some ways the "end user" can help advance this goal. It's easy to learn just enough about the system to get by and to focus on the assigned task. But, with careful attention to your system's deficiencies and encouraging teamwork among your IT specialists and EHR vendor to address those issues, you will accomplish more, and impact other practices utilizing the same system. Evaluating the clinical decision support tools, standardizing the workflow, making appropriate modifications, and training and retraining to avoid perpetuating "user errors" passed down from others, are all ways to keep critical thinking and teamwork at the forefront.

The Physician Insurers Association of America's (PIAA) most recent review of EHR claims noted a rise in technology-related liability. "As EHR use is rising, so are MPL (medical professional liability) claims linked to the technology. As we continue to identify problems, we need to track the cause of those issues and share mitigation strategies," said PIAA's Vice President of Research & Risk Management P. Divya Parikh. "The goal remains to continually improve the safe use of EHRs and health IT. ONC's SAFER self-assessment Guides offer tools that users can utilize to help ensure continuous improvement in EHR systems so that perhaps eventually EHRs can offer the benefits of increased productivity and lower cost that have been promised."*

* The Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) published Safety Assurance Factors for EHR Resilience (SAFER) Guides, which are available [here](#).

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