How to Overcome 3 Common Barriers to Physician EHR Adoption
Written by Helen Gregg | July 10, 2013

The national average for electronic health record adoption in acute-care hospitals stands at 44.4 percent, according to a report from the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology. Physician adoption of EHR system remains a struggle for hospitals both adopting an EHR for the first time or working to achieve the stages of meaningful use.

"EHR adoption will be a tough sell until it makes providers' lives easier," says Frank Vittimberga, MD, CMO at Methodist Charlton Medical Center in Dallas.

Below, three professionals on the front lines of EHR adoption share solutions for three commonly encountered barriers that keep EHRs from being useful tools for physicians.

Barrier: Slowed-down data entry
Solution: Speech recognition software
"Typing itself is a barrier" to EHR adoption, says Adem Arslani, BSN, MS, director of information systems and clinical informatics at Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital in Barrington, Ill. He recommends speech-recognition software to facilitate EHR use without slowing down a physician's workflow. The software can "help the physician document much more efficiently," he says.

Speech recognition software can also help combat broader usability issues within EHR systems, says Mr. Arslani. At Advocate Good Shepherd, physicians' workflows were analyzed and speech recognition templates were created for the EHR system to allow physicians to use voice commands to easily complete their tasks.

All in all, speech recognition software is a "worthy investment," he says.

Barrier: EHR does not meet providers' needs
Solution: Work with the EHR vendor to get customized solution
"Lots of vendors seem to expect all providers to use the software as it is out of the box," says Jeff Loughlin, project director of Massachusetts eHealth Collaborative and executive director of the Regional Extension Center of New Hampshire. However, each hospital's workflow and internal processes means EHR systems cannot truly be one-size-fits-all, he says. He advocates working with the EHR vendor to create a system that works for the individual hospital.

However, working with a vendor should ultimately result in a compromise, not an ultimatum, says Mr. Laughlin. "I've seen a lot of providers demand that the software mimic their current workflow — that's also unrealistic," he says. "You need to find a compromise in the middle that optimizes the software."
Barrier: Device accessibility
Solution: Place EHR-capable devices where physicians need them
Thomas H. Payne, MD, medical director of information technology services at UW Medicine in Seattle, says one of the best strategies to facilitate EHR adoption is to have devices that can be used to access the EHR in convenient places around the hospital. "Have devices, laptops or tablets at bedsides or wherever physicians might need to use them," says Dr. Payne. "Don't expect physicians to go out of way to find a device to use."

UW Hospitals "went to lot of effort to put devices everywhere," he says. "Physicians appreciated that."