



Interoperability

Sharing Patient Data Across Care Settings

One of the primary goals of recent Healthcare Reform legislation is to ensure that information stored in various EMR systems can be electronically shared between providers and care settings in a format that works with all EMRs. Interoperability is more than just sharing patient documentation because it is focused specifically on the exchange of unique data elements related to patient care. While many EMRs that are Meaningful Use certified include extensive sets of data elements stored in SQL or other database tables, there is not yet uniformity between the data elements in various EMRs. Meaningful use is thus the first step on the much longer path towards complete interoperability because it requires standardization in the format and contents of some of the most central data points used in patient care.

Health Information Exchange (HIE)

Many providers in large cities are now encountering the demands of interoperability because of the development of Health Information Exchanges or HIEs in their communities. Sometimes participation in certain Health Plans or Networks is predicated on the need to exchange data with the HIE of a given hospital or Accountable Care Organization (ACO). While most EMR systems are HL7 compliant (meaning that they store their data in a standardized way that can be interfaced with other systems), this certification only denotes that a system has the ability to exchange data, not that your data is stored in an appropriate format or that the necessary interfaces and security measures exist. If your practice is currently not using an EMR, not participating in Meaningful Use, or using a smaller EMR that is not interfaced with an HIE, it can be challenging to determine what to do and what options you have. If you're not sure whether your system is prepared to exchange data with other providers, you're not alone. **We Can Help.** Give us a call and we can start working on determining what your options are and how to meet your goals today.

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