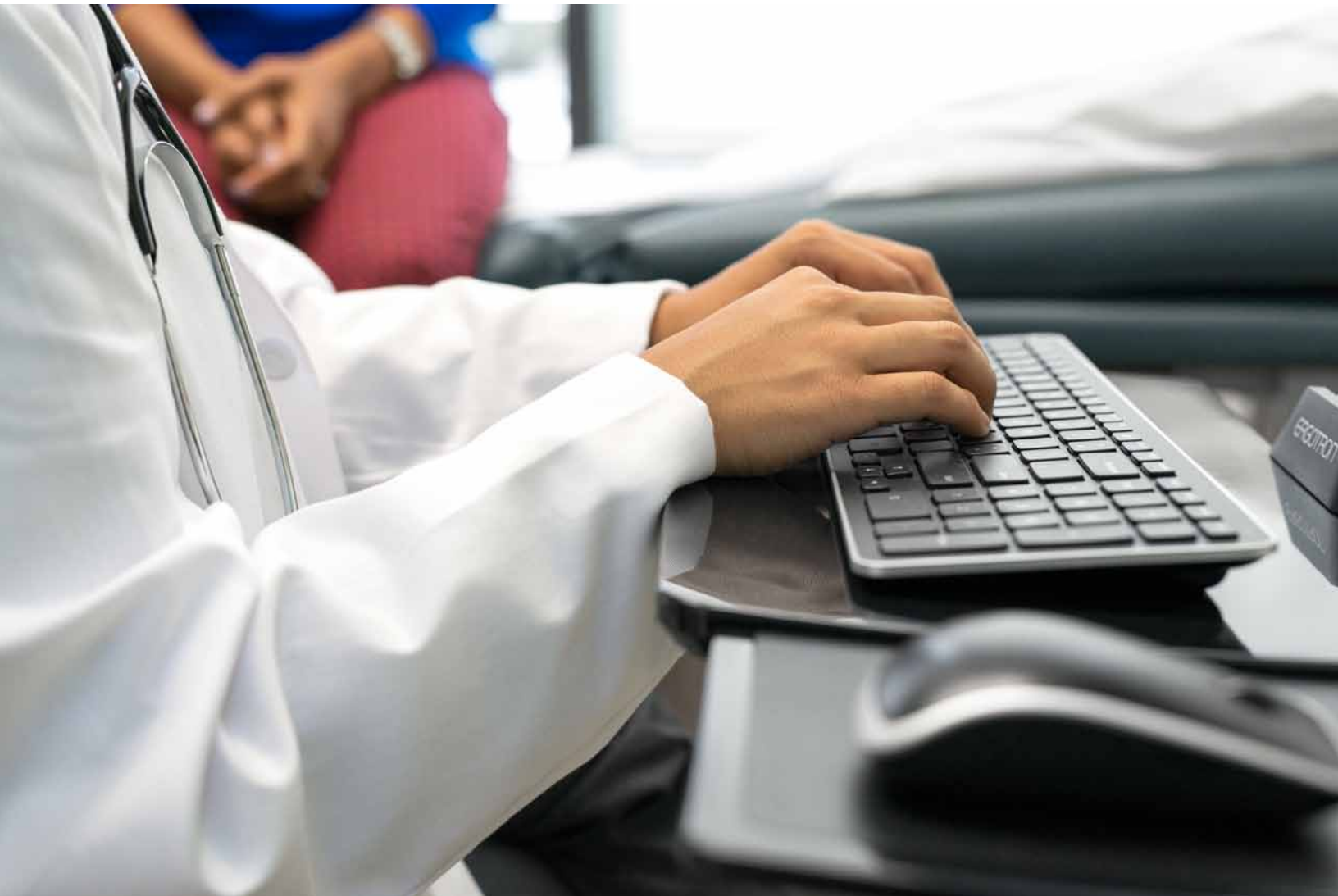


Ensuring Providers Achieve Electronic Health Record Adoption

Heather Haugen, PhD, Managing Director for
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Are Electronic Health Records Delivering on their Promise?

For years, healthcare organizations have worked to implement electronic health records (EHR). Our primary goal has been to transform healthcare by providing access to comprehensive medical information that is secure, standardized, and shared. Ultimately, EHRs should help us deliver better, safer, and higher-quality care.

Despite a lot of hard work and significant investments, we continue to struggle to realize the promise of the EHR technology.

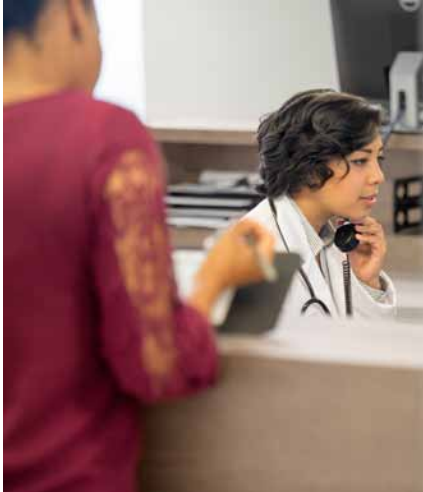
According to the Department of Health & Human Services, more than half of all doctors' offices and 80 percent of eligible hospitals are using an EHR today. But many organizations don't get far past implementation of the technology. The adoption of the technology requires proficient end users, improved outcomes and plans for sustaining the technology over the life of the application. Optimizing the workflows and becoming more efficient over time is an even bigger hurdle, but it is a critical step in giving healthcare providers time back to care for their patients.

The first step, implementation, happens when the EHR system is installed and live – an important milestone from a technology perspective, but only a small step in the adoption process. Once the system is up and running, healthcare organizations must work toward adoption. Adoption is the continuous process of keeping users informed and engaged, providing innovative ways for them to become proficient in new tasks quickly, measuring outcomes and striving to sustain that level of performance longterm. Unlike implementation, adoption is not a single event but a journey.

There are many factors that can erode adoption of an EHR system over time. Most organizations face multiple upgrades every year that require education and changes in workflow. New employees, medical students and residents must be taught to use the technology. Having a plan for upgrades and reliable onboarding makes a big difference in how well the system serves the organization over time. Most healthcare organizations do this well at go-live, but don't invest in maintaining that level of communication, education and metrics after the initial installation.

Our research published in the book, *Beyond Implementation: A Prescription for the Adoption of Healthcare Technology*, identified four elements that predict long-term success for organizations adopting this new technology.

- **Engaged Leadership:** Organizations that achieve high levels of adoption demonstrate engaged leadership which includes clinical leaders. These leaders must be involved in decisions, communication and evolution of their EHR by refining workflows, templates, utilization, and reporting to meet their organizations' clinical and financial goals.
- **Proficient Users:** Targeted streamlined education can significantly reduce training time and associated costs, while rapidly building user proficiency and confidence. The goal of developing *proficiency* to perform common daily tasks – as opposed to requiring *mastery* of multitudinous software bells and whistles – can be achieved quickly and effectively. Brief, role- and scenario-based online simulations that are relevant, self-paced, and accessible on demand appeal to clinicians.



About the Author

Heather Haugen, PhD, is Managing Director for Knowledge Solutions which provides a research-based approach that allows for healthcare professionals to quickly adopt new technologies. She can be reached at (303) 483-4300 or heather.haugen@conduent.com.

- **Comprehensive Metrics:** Healthcare organizations who achieve adoption use data to understand areas of opportunity to improve workflows and education. They can analyze data entered in a meaningful way that can be used to impact productivity and outcomes. The EHR is of little value if the data is not clinically valuable or left unused.
- **Sustained Planning and Focus:** Organizations that maximize the effectiveness of their EHR system have made a long-term commitment to adoption. Change occurs frequently in healthcare, so system optimization requires preparation, ongoing adjustment, and communication.

Conclusion

When healthcare organizations use an EHR system to its full potential, it means less redundancy, fewer errors, reduced costs, and capitalization on the promise of a higher level of care. To make this a reality, organizations must take the journey beyond EHR implementation through adoption, traversing the valleys of the inevitable (and necessary) technology advancements and upgrades. And, while the journey is arduous, healthcare organizations can be assured that a discipline around technology adoption makes achieving the ultimate promise of EHRs entirely possible.

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