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3 things to consider when selecting an EHR

Electronic health records (EHR) are commonplace in physician practices now, but physicians know they haven't always made it easier to practice medicine or provide high-quality care. A [free online module](#) in the AMA's [STEPS Forward](#) collection can help you prioritize the needs of your patients and your practice to make the best EHR choice. There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to EHR adoption, but there are things you can consider before you make your selection.



Assess the needs of your practice to determine the most important and relevant characteristics you need in an EHR system. Consider:

1. Health IT your practice already uses

Interoperability is still a major concern for physicians using EHRs, but you generally can find one with basic interoperability. If you're already using a variety of health IT for managing patient information and medical care, such as e-prescribing software or a practice management system, choose an EHR that can integrate with your existing systems.

2. Health IT providers and products other health care partners in your network are using

You might wish to give consideration to systems used by other groups you often interact with to help ensure you choose a system that can integrate, or at least communicate, with these other systems. Without this capability, some paper-based processes will remain unchanged even with an EHR. For example, instead of transmitting lab tests and referrals electronically, you'll still have to send them via fax.

3. Systems used by local hospitals and health care systems that may partner with you in the future

Other local health care groups may prefer a certain type of EHR and may be willing to subsidize or assist with adoption. Partnering with these groups may help you negotiate a lower-cost option.

Many more details on this process can be found in the module, including downloadable resources to help you in your decision. The module also includes information about how to get support for implementing EHR changes in your practice, and it offers continuing medical education credit.

Additional insights into making the most of your EHR

Several other STEPS Forward modules can help you maximize the benefits of using an EHR in your practice. These include:

- [Implementing an EHR](#) in your practice
- [Using team documentation](#) to free up time for patient care
- [Synchronizing prescription renewals](#) to streamline this time-consuming task

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