

## Electronic Health Records and Medical Malpractice

Often attributed as a partial cause of the ever-increasing cost of health care, medical malpractice claims are a common, and costly, risk faced by health care providers. However, according to recent research, technological developments in the health care industry may be able to lower some of the risk of medical malpractice claims.

Studies have begun to track the effect that the use of electronic health record (EHR) systems has on preventing medical malpractice claims. EHRs allow doctors to quickly scan patients' medical histories, giving them more background information, which leads to a more accurate diagnosis. It also means avoiding duplication of tests and negative reactions between medications. When all of this information is readily available, doctors and nurses can make better decisions about patient health. Better care means fewer mistakes, which in turn means fewer malpractice claims. The clear record they provide of a patient's treatment history also makes EHRs useful in defending against a medical malpractice claim if one is filed.

### Additional Benefits

EHRs may be able to do more than just help prevent claims, they may also get you a lower rate from your insurer. If study results continue to confirm the connection between EHRs and lowered occurrences of medical malpractice claims, insurers may start offering discounts to facilities that implement such systems.

Going beyond the realm of malpractice claims, EHRs also offer a number of other benefits to both your staff and

patients. Once implemented, EHRs can streamline many of your existing processes. Charts no longer need to be physically moved from one location to another. With a few clicks, patient information can be brought up anywhere in your facility instantly. This kind of quick access to patient information means information stays up to date and is always on hand. This not only makes life easier on staff members, it also means that patients get high-quality, efficient care.

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**EHRs make accurate patient information readily available to doctors and nurses, allowing for a more efficient standard of care that cuts down on potential malpractice claims.**

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### Implementation

Even though EHRs can simplify operations and save money in the long run, the investment of time and money that is required to switch to a new system deters some health care providers. However, the switch to EHRs may soon be unavoidable. Recently there has been an increased focus on EHR implementation by federal regulators. Fortunately, with the push for a more broad adoption of the technology comes a potential increase in available government funding to help health care providers make the switch.

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Provided by Medical Society of Virginia Insurance Agency

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When you make the decision to transition from paper records to an electronic system, there will be a learning period that goes along with the implementation process. The full benefit of EHRs cannot be realized unless employees are properly trained in how to use them. If systems are poorly implemented, they will not generate the positive returns they are capable of.

Adopting EHRs takes an initial commitment from you and your staff, but in the long run, they can simplify operations and save money all while helping you provide the best possible care to your patients.