

EHR Selection for Small Practices: Common Pitfalls & Mistakes

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- Never take anything for granted. Never assume anything about the EHR. Do not feel intimidated out of asking questions.
 - One of the reasons we chose our system was because the local element was stressed. There was no in-person training, and although some questions are answered locally, any complicated questions or system issues are farmed out to multiple companies.
- We'd never again recommend a second-party reseller after this experience.
 - "Too many cooks" – it takes forever to get answers or solutions to issues.
 - Both entities feel that you're not their problem when something goes wrong.
- Lab integration is a major issue. We've had massive problems with not just our own lab's integration; ensure your system is able to handle hospital interfaces, too.
- Make your practice aware of a clearly defined path to your knowledge source.
 - To whom do you address system questions? What is the support path? Is there a specific department to contact?
 - None of this was clearly set out for us at the beginning. This needs to be known at the outset!
- Make sure there are resources and adequate training for the Super User.
 - They will need more advanced training, online resources, etc. Our Super User does Meaningful Use and Medical Home reporting, fixes all issues, and customizes the system for a large office with varied needs. Their training needs to be very thorough.
- Unfortunately, all companies bury their online search results; it is difficult to find any user testimonials.
 - We made the mistake of "taking everyone's word for it". Dig deeper. Read HISTalk and industry blogs. Don't be shy about asking for multiple demos.
 - Any way for practices across Vermont to communicate would be incredibly beneficial. VITL is an excellent, helpful resource, but this is not their main focus.
 - Perhaps a statewide contact person database of employees/managers/IT willing to discuss their systems?
- All practices – nationwide – who were affected by the Allscripts/Etransmedia litigation have felt as if they had no recourse and nowhere to turn for help. Statewide, practices have been trying to band together to help each other out, but it is very difficult to do when running a small practice.
 - Most practices do not have the benefit of an IT department or dedicated employee to focus on these issues.
 - Any helpful momentum easily loses steam due to providers being unable to divert their focus to something that looks like it's an uphill battle from the get-go.
 - This is an unfortunate situation, but it's doubtful it'll be the only time it happens. I suspect many companies are counting on practices to just roll over due to not having time to press the issue. (And it takes a LOT of time!)
 - The Wish-Upon-A-Star Solution? I would love to see a VT Practices Online Message Board, where information, personal experiences, recommendations, helpful tips, and ideas could be exchanged with other EHR users.

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