



The Case for EHR in Your Chiropractic Practice

By Dr. Kevin Sharp, DC

THE CHALLENGE

It's not easy being a small practice physician these days. You struggle to maintain your client base despite economic conditions that still impact your patients. You work to keep administrative costs down, but they continue to rise. You count on payments from insurance companies and government, yet insurers keep squeezing you for lower reimbursements, while documentation for compliance comes under even closer scrutiny.

Despite these challenges, there are positive developments for chiropractors. You're in a growing industry. The U.S. Department of Labor says that employment of chiropractors is expected to increase by 28 percent from 2010 to 2020, faster than the average for all occupations. In addition, an aging baby-boom generation will mean new opportunities since older people are more likely to experience musculoskeletal and joint problems.

Another plus is the availability of highly effective Electronic Medical Record (EMR) software to simplify office procedures and save you money. For various reasons, not all chiropractors are embracing this technology. In this report, we'll examine what's known as EHR/EMR and show how it can help your practice survive in an increasingly complex regulatory environment.

WHAT IS EHR/EMR?

The Electronic Medical Record (EMR) is a digital version of a paper-based medical record. While EMR has been around for years, it has evolved from storing medical records on computer to moving the information to computerized patient records, and, more recently, to being developed as an Electronic Health Records (EHR) system.

The adoption of EHR/EMR is just around the corner. With strong government backing, all medical records in the U.S. will be converted into the electronic format by 2014. As a result, the U.S. EHR/EMR market is expected to grow from \$2,177 million in 2009 to \$6,054 million in 2015. Helping spur this growth was passage in 2009 of The Health Information



Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act, part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. It represents the nation's first substantial commitment of Federal resources to support the widespread adoption of EHRs.

Electronic Health Records (EHR) and Electronic Medical Records (EMR) are often used interchangeably. The main difference is that EHR provides a more comprehensive view into a patient's health and history by pulling information from multiple health systems.

WHY INVEST IN EHR/EMR?

An investment in EHR/EMR will help increase your revenues, decrease costs and improve patient care. It can also be an effective way to capture, process, and report the increasing amounts of data required by numerous payers. This information, properly submitted, is critical to receiving insurance reimbursements that are based on how you meet quality of care standards. For a small office, this type of paperwork can be complicated and time consuming. EHR makes it easy.

Save Money

Along with increasing revenue, saving money is another reason to invest in EHR/EMR. Here's some data from studies of physician practices that are using EHR. Bottom line, the financial benefits averaged \$33,000 per physician per year, with savings coming from two main sources:

- Increased coding levels that led to improved billing
- Greater efficiency from a decrease in personnel costs (1)

While that's a tidy sum of money, the savings and revenue increases with EHR don't stop there. Here's a look at other ways EHR can benefit your practice:

- With EHR, it's easy to capture charges for all chiropractic services, thereby avoiding lost revenues.
- The reimbursement process will be faster and easier with supporting documentation that complies with CMS guidelines and other industry standards and supports the appropriate level of service to be billed.

- Chiropractors will be more productive because progress notes are automatically generated and can be signed electronically from home or work, with no pulling or filing of charts.
- With an EHR/EMR system, fewer staff are needed to process clients, search for records or file patient charts.
- Transcription costs will plummet since medical charts are created electronically at the time of the patient's visit.
- The cost of purchasing, copying, storing or destroying paper charts will be eliminated.
- Improved documentation, audit trails, and accuracy will reduce medical errors and increase the chances of receiving discounts from insurers.

Make Money

For years, proper documentation for compliance has been a tough challenge for chiropractors, but now the government will pay you to do it. That's a great deal that you should jump on.

Here's how it works: The HITECH Act authorizes the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to issue annual payments to eligible providers who demonstrate Meaningful Use of a Certified EHR/EMR System. To demonstrate Meaningful Use, you must complete an Attestation process, which your EHR/EMR provider can assist with.

With HITECH incentive funding, chiropractors could be eligible for up to \$24,000 in reimbursements over three years. And, as noted earlier, CMS will pay HITECH incentives on a per provider basis to offset the cost of implementing EHR.

But . . . to receive maximum funding, Medicare eligible chiropractors must put certified EHR in place by October 1, 2014. After 2015, Medicare eligible chiropractors that do not successfully demonstrate meaningful use of an EHR system will have their Medicare reimbursement payments adjusted.

HOW REIMBURSEMENT WORKS

If you are a single physician practice with \$24,000 in annual Medicare billings, and you become eligible in 2014, you'll receive a total of \$24,000 over three years with \$12,000 coming in the first year (2014).

If you wait to implement EHR until 2015, you will no longer be eligible for the EHR incentive funding and will also have a payment adjustment on your Medicare reimbursement.

What if your Medicare billings are less than \$24,000 annually? In this case, you will receive 75% of your Medicare billings annually in additional reimbursement capped at \$12,000. For example, a single physician practice with \$10,000 in annual Medicare billings that begins use in 2014 would receive \$7,500 the first year and a total of \$19,000 over three years - still a good bit of money for your practice!

Increase Efficiency

In a busy chiropractic office, even the smallest administrative tasks can slow you down. Documenting compliance by hand, a tedious process, can significantly impact how many patients you see in a day or a week.

Chiropractic EHR offers a way to streamline your practice and increase efficiencies in major ways. Simply put, effective EHR automates your front office, your clinical notes and even patient paperwork. Plus, easy navigation tools help your staff work faster, more efficiently and more cost-effectively.



**EXPECTED REIMBURSEMENTS
IF YOU BEGIN IN 2014,
BASED UPON A SINGLE
PHYSICIAN PRACTICE WITH
\$24,000 IN ANNUAL
MEDICARE BILLINGS**

Here is a sampling of time and money saving features that chiropractors should look for when considering an EHR system for their practice:

- ***Clinical Documentation (SOAP Notes)***

Patient Records are created and maintained using narrative libraries that you control. EHR eliminates the hassles associated with travel cards, manila folders, or hanging files. This feature lets you treat more patients in less time.

- ***Transcription Library***

This feature eliminates the obsolete and mundane tasks involving common medical terms specific to your practice, thus making transcription in SOAP Notes speedy and accurate.

- ***Patient Portal Website***

This is a powerful tool for intake, patient payments, scheduling, charting their progress and even making co-pays with a Virtual Payments function. For example, patients can log on at home and update records, complete forms in real time, and accomplish many other tasks you may require of them.

- ***Online Scheduler***

It's your best friend in enterprise medical scheduling. It does the searching for you. We take care of appointment confirmations, reminders, re-calls and more. Your Online Scheduler may be customized for your practice, and there are no limits on providers or resources.

WHY DO SOME CHIROPRACTORS RESIST EHR/EMR?

The cost of implementing an EHR/EMR system may explain why some chiropractors resist implementing this solution even though the government will cover any of your costs under the HITECH Act. Another factor is a general resistance to change. Some chiropractors and their office managers might say, "We're doing okay, and the staff is comfortable with what we have. Why should we take the time to add EHR?"

As this report has shown, implementing EHR pays for itself in revenues gained, administrative costs reduced and compliance issues resolved.

“EHR is such a paradigm shift on how to run your office that many are reluctant to take the step,” says Dr. Kevin Sharp, founder of Sharp Chiropractic in Winston Salem, North Carolina. “Once they make the move to EHR, they’ll find it completely organizes their practice into the 21st century.”

THE CASE FOR MEDIFUSION EHR/EMR

Founded in 2006 and based in Florida, Medicfusion EHR/EMR delivers cutting edge technology that is equal to or better than the top competitors at just a fraction of the cost. Designed by chiropractors for chiropractors, Medicfusion EHR/EMR is a paperless, cloud-based system that will save you time and money.

Dr. Sharp, an expert in compliant clinical documentation and insurance industry standards whose practice uses Medicfusion, says, “In this day and age, you need EHR if you’re going to generate compliant and original documentation and still see a reasonable level of patients each week.” For this busy chiropractor another important advantage with EHR is that, “I now have my evenings, vacations, and free time for relaxation. This has been by far the largest benefit with EHR I have experienced over and above the significant increases in profitability and peace of mind with my practice. Time with family and friends is invaluable and I now have that time!”

MEDICFUSION IS:

- **HITECH Certified** - This is an important consideration since incentive dollars are available to practices that implement a HITECH certified EHR. Attestation is part of qualifying for meaningful use and government incentive funding. This process may seem overwhelming, but Medicfusion’s free Attestation Coaching will make it easier.
- **Web-Based System** - In today’s economic and technology environment, client server-based software no longer makes sense. Medicfusion’s seamlessly integrated, 24/7 support over the Internet provides instant access whenever and wherever you need it.

- **Priceless Protection** - In case of disaster such as a flood, hurricane, fire or tornado, when client server-based software is vulnerable, Medicfusion's Web-Based system protects your practice. Regardless of what happens with brick and mortar structures, your valuable patient records will be safe. They can be accessed in the time it takes to plug in a new computer and login to Medicfusion.
- **Affordable Solution** - Medicfusion set up costs run as low as \$3,000 with monthly support payments around \$225 a month.

For a complete list of our extensive portfolio of features and benefits, please visit our website.

CALL US TODAY

To learn more about Medicfusion's industry-leading EMR/EMR system for chiropractors, contact us at 1-866-643-7778, info@medicfusion.com, or visit www.Medicfusion.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Dr. Kevin Sharp, founder of Sharp Chiropractic in Winston Salem, NC is one of the country's foremost experts in the areas of compliant clinical documentation and insurance industry standards. His expertise includes a combination of active chiropractic practice, continuing education, teaching, consulting and advisory work.

Noted for delivering informative and inspirational lectures to chiropractors and their staff, Dr. Sharp is a sought-after speaker on chiropractic issues as well as an advocate for chiropractic patients with insurance carriers. With over 20 years helping and caring for patients, he has developed a keen perspective on how to communicate, document and tell the story of a chiropractic patient.

Among Dr. Sharp's achievements has been serving as the instructor for the North Carolina Chiropractic Association's "Adjustor Training Program," where he presents a chiropractic model of treatment to Liability Adjustors. He was also instrumental in bringing a number of Group Health, Liability, Work Comp and allied insurance professionals together to work with the chiropractic community.

The recipient of numerous industry awards, Dr. Sharp was recently inducted as a Fellow into the International College of Chiropractors, one of the highest honors given to doctors of chiropractic.

A native of Flint, Michigan, Dr. Sharp is a graduate of the Los Angeles College of Chiropractic, receiving both the President's and Clinical Excellence award. He opened Sharp Chiropractic in 1998 and, to this day, his greatest passion continues to be caring for patients in his daily practice. Dr. Sharp is married with seven children.