

Benefits of Practice Management & EMR Software

Clinical software can be a great facilitating agent, allowing a platform for collaboration amongst 'all' users of the practice, without exception

I have spent more than eight years in the Medical Informatics domain and have interacted with innumerable doctors across the world in the process. It is a fascinating experience to see how physicians have their own unique process and workflow and yet achieve the common goal. There is, however, a big difference in the way a clinical management and Electronic Medical Records (EMR) software is perceived in the developed nations. In this article, I will point out how exploiting the computer as an intellectual, deductive and decision-support instrument can lead to better management of patients and the clinic.



There are a few common misconceptions about using clinical software which is why they are looked upon with a jaundiced eye. Good quality software does not slow the doctor down, it assists the doctor in becoming more productive by removing the monotony, excessive paperwork, reliance on memory and fatigue from running a busy practice.

Many doctors I meet have a pre-conceived notion that they will lose focus and eye-contact with the patient and would rather end up typing during most of the consultation.

As a matter of fact, a good clinical software, if used properly allows the doctor to spend more quality time with patients. The doctor is able to take advantage of features such as charting and graphs and can also visually demonstrate to a patient changes in their conditions such as weight and blood pressure. This is a differentiation the patient will realise in various points of interaction with the clinic.

From a business perspective, most clinics are unable to answer some simple questions which directly affect their quality assurance and revenues. Some of the questions are how many patients did it treat over the last eight weeks, how many patients with chronic issues visit for regular care, how many patients who were asked to come back for a check-up actually turned up and what is the success rate of a particular treatment plan. The clinics which can answer these questions or at least some of them have a far superior rate of patient satisfaction and almost certainly use software to manage their practice.

Well researched, country specific and technically-robust clinic management software has the following qualities, which over time produce great results for the clinic, its staff and its patients.

Here is what a good software has:

- Easy to learn, simple to use and scalable across multiple providers and clinic staff.
- Customisable to suit the doctor's workflow and specialty.
- Fast data input without the need of too much typing.
- Shortcuts and favourites to further enhance speed without compromising quality.
- Reliable and updated drug information database with interaction, allergy and pregnancy alerts.

- Formatted data output as graphs, charts and user defined layouts.
- In-depth clinical reports which provide an insight into patient demographics, treatment effectiveness, and much more valuable research.
- Conforming to international standards such as ICD, HL7 and DICOM.
- Hassle free accounting reducing paperwork and need to maintain separate systems.
- Simple to understand financial and administrative reports which provides business intelligence.
- Dedicated training process, software updates and support from the vendor.

With more than 16,000 generic drug compositions and depending upon the condition of the patient (pregnant and minor), there are several billion possible adverse interactions that comes into play during prescribing. It is impossible to keep track of them all, and remember and apply it at the time of prescribing.

Patients, however, expect that their doctor should know everything about medicines. For instance, cases of interaction between Moxifloxacin and Ondansetron are common and can be fatal for the patient. Patients with one or more chronic disorders are becoming more and more prominent. For example, a patient with diabetes and hypertension would normally be on insulin and if they are prescribed Asthalin, the effectiveness of insulin activity is reduced drastically. A good software takes care of that.

As an added advantage, usability, accuracy and speed can be considerably enhanced if the software lets you define custom protocols, store readymade prescriptions and create a subset of commonly prescribed drugs.

Chronic disease management is the fastest growing segment of primary and secondary care in India. Stress and lifestyle-related disorders are on the rise. Managing these problems require dedicated care plans, acute attention to specific vitals, targeted care delivery, and above all strong evidence to patients that the clinic understands and is capable of delivering as good if not better care than the super speciality corporate clinics that are springing up across the country. Good clinical software supports customised care plans, examination templates, graphical charts to spot vital breakouts, allows multiple service providers within and beyond a practice to act concertedly on the patients file, offering best of patient care.

Clinical software can be a great facilitating agent, allowing a platform for collaboration amongst 'all' users of the practice, without exception. That includes the care providers, clinical assistants, reception staff and the accountant. From years of research, I believe that using a good clinical management and EMR software cannot be ignored for much longer.

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