

## Position White Paper

### Physician Practice Management Software

by Sharon Libell Leenhouts, MHSA

Healthcare information technology has blossomed in the last 5 years. Where few satisfactory solutions for physician practice management software existed in the past, many products are currently available for purchase. The focus of this article is to identify selection criteria for healthcare providers. Proper software selection will eliminate unnecessary implementation and maintenance expenses. In addition, it can lead to improved quality of care and enhanced reimbursement options.

The healthcare provider should not be led astray when purchasing a software product. There are many sophisticated electronic medical record products available for any computer system. These may have template functionality, but there may be an expectation that the user will develop his/her own practice management software rules.

Developing practice management rules for specific disease categories will require an amazing amount of focus and energy. There must be undying motivation to study the rules and maintain them in the computer system.

A reliable practice management software product will have pre-defined rules which are reflective of current, progressive medical treatment philosophy. As technology changes, so do the treatment rules. The software product must have the undying dedication of a panel of medical experts who will submit updates to the program as needed.

In addition, the physician practice management software product should be a web based product. A web-based product eliminates the need for individual updates and miscommunication. The current version of the product is available at a moment's notice after the product has been upgraded. This leads to little confusion and little need for confusing version control.

A web-hosted software product adds flexibility and is lower in cost. The product may be accessed from a variety of servers. There is no need for duplicative product storage. Less server space must be allocated to the use of the product and storage of the results.

The physician practice management software product should interface with other databases, including the electronic medical record. When possible, data fields should be automatically populated so that there is little need for duplicate data entry. Duplicate entry not only leads to greater production costs, but also contributes to a greater error rate.

Finally, a higher quality physician practice management software product will collect data in a format which may be easily used for reporting purposes. This will help with justifying patient severity level and reporting quality oriented statistics. It will also help providers reflect on the appropriate method or mode of treatment.

Thus, we have seen that the selection of an appropriate practice management software product has become imperative in today's world of constant change. The product should have built in, rules of operation. These practice rules should be changed as does the industry so as to reflect the most up-to-date treatment protocol for a specific disease category. The product should be web based and should interface with many existing data sources. Finally, an adequate warehouse should result to as to promote proper adhoc and standard reporting.

With the selection criteria presented here, the user will more successfully choose an appropriate physician practice management software product for the clinic setting.

