Top 10 Considerations for Choosing an Emergency Department EHR (EDIS)
According to the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Emergency Department visits have continually increased over the past several years. This upward trend is expected to continue – due in large part to an aging population and overall population growth.

With this increased volume comes the challenge of treating patients as efficiently, quickly and safely as possible. As the “front door” to the hospital, emergency departments require a system that enables them to make every minute count, and maximize efficiency for better care and outcomes.

With paper-based systems, ED clinicians have to manually rifle through charts for information, try to keep tabs on several patients and their conditions, chase diagnostic reports – or worse, locate a lost chart. It’s simply not very efficient.

This explains why the utilization of Electronic Health Records (EHRs) in the Emergency Department have become more mainstream over the past decade. However, not all EHR systems are created equal, especially ones not specifically designed for the ED. For example, many legacy Hospital Information Systems (HIS) and enterprise-wide EHRs are woefully inadequate when used in the ED as they simply try to leverage the inpatient system already developed. The biggest complaints of these types of systems are excessive clicks, inappropriate workflow and content, a lack of clinical alerts, and system lag time – all of which creates risk management issues, hurts productivity (and revenue), and frustrates clinicians and patients alike.

For many hospitals, the answer is an Emergency Department EHR, or EDIS (Emergency Department Information System). When evaluating one for your hospital – whether you’re upgrading from a paper system, a legacy HIS, or another EDIS platform – there are several key considerations to keep in mind. We’ve uncovered the top ten for you in the following pages.

*Not all Emergency Department EHRs are created equal.*
WHAT CLINICIANS NEED (SPEED, ACCURACY, EASE-OF-USE)

When life or death decisions need to be made, clinicians need a system that’s built for speed, accuracy and ease-of-use—one that allows them to focus on the patient and spend less time completing paperwork.

Typically, clinicians look for a few key criteria:

• **Intuitive navigation** with less clicks to minimize burnout
• **Less time charting** (autosave and search/find features are must-haves!)
• **A short learning curve** so staff (even new ones) can get up to speed quickly
• **Documentation that follows workflow** for faster charting
• **Quick application response** when every second counts

With Wellsoft EDIS, clinicians work in a total of 3 screens and are typically proficient on the system in 1-3 shifts!

INSIDER’S TIP

Clinician burnout is a widespread problem in healthcare that many claim is in part caused by EHRs and ‘too many clicks’. Finding a solution that works with them – within their workflow – is key to better adoption, happier staff, and less chance for burnout.

Did you know? A recent 2017 KLAS report on EDIS Usability shows best-of-breed EDIS vendors set the bar and surpass enterprise EDIS vendors in terms of usability and workflow satisfaction.
INTEGRATED CODING AND BILLING TO IMPROVE ED PROFITABILITY

Is your hospital losing revenue in the Emergency Department? It doesn’t have to. A common problem for many hospitals is not billing accurately or timely for services provided in the Emergency Department. This can result in a significant amount of unrealized revenue. Inaccurate billing is frequently due to incomplete charting, clinical documentation that does not support the level of care provided, and/or inconsistent application of infusion calculations and modifiers – all of which can cause the loss hundreds of thousands of dollars in allowable ED reimbursements.

To ensure billing accuracy and optimize revenue, look for a system that provides:

- Timely, complete and accurate automatic charge capture for E&M Level of Service, CPT, and Service Codes
- Integrated charge capture that automatically captures start/stop times (without clinician effort), charges for pushes, injections and hydration procedures including modifiers
- Immediate regulatory and procedure changes for facility and physician coding, thereby eliminating coding-related denials

With integrated coding and billing, hospitals are able to generate a highly accurate, consistent and objective ED patient bill, completely supported by the medical record. This allows them to decrease coding time and speed reimbursement, leading to a decrease in A/R days – and a potentially significant increase in revenue.
Hospitals rely on data collection in order to measure, track and improve performance. There are many ways EHRs can collect data and report on it. Here are some important questions to consider:

- Is data collection built into YOUR workflow? Are data points automatically captured in the background? Can needed data elements be added on the fly by your staff to support special requirements and clinical trials?
- Is both structured and unstructured data pulled for reports? Does this include clinical, financial and operational data?
- What is included in standard reports? What custom reports are also available?
- Does the EHR provide reporting on key performance indicators? Legislative efforts? Mandated public health disease reporting? Billing and financial management indicators?
- Are the reports offered in different output formats?
A one-size-fits-all approach doesn’t work for the ED when it comes to an EHR. With ED operations being vastly different than the rest of the hospital, the HIS that may work brilliantly in other areas of the hospital may not be a good fit for the ED. Additionally, although all might have some similarities, every ED is different. Therefore, each Emergency Department needs a system that is tailored and fine tuned for its own environment, workflows and goals. Here are a few things to take into consideration:

- What specifically can be customized? Can the vendor provide customizable and personalized "Favorites" Templates for both Physicians and Nurses? Is the ED Tracking Board fully customizable with full user preferences for sort, sequence, display, settings, etc.? Can clinical templates be customized/built by the facility? Is there a Rules Processor/Clinical Decision Support tool that is configurable by site? Can free-text be included in decision support queries/algorithms? Does the vendor offer an Executive Dashboard that can be tailored to specifications?

- Does the system support creation of custom inactive forms to support local documentation requirements?

- Does the system have the ability to customize by individual (based on provider role or log-on)? How does the vendor handle facility-specific customizations?

- Is downtime required to make modifications? Can some modifications be made on the spot?

- How quickly can the system accommodate for regulatory changes affecting the ED? (i.e. New Sepsis guidelines)

Remember when Ebola surfaced in the U.S.? With it came the overnight need for an Ebola screening tool in the ER. With the possibility of the virus spreading so rapidly, hospitals couldn’t wait weeks or even a few days for a screening tool. They needed it ASAP! Wellsoft was able to customize the EDIS for a Texas hospital client overnight and put it into production immediately the next day.
Integration is a critical component when it comes to choosing and implementing any system in the hospital. It’s no different in the ED. You need a system built on scalable and flexible architecture that allows it to integrate well with EHR and HIS platforms, HIEs, as well as lab, radiology, pharmacy, PACs, cardiology, billing and other ancillary systems.

Many people assume just because a company is categorized as an enterprise EDIS or HIS vendor that the integration is better than non-enterprise or best-of-breed systems. That’s not necessarily always the case. Some best-of-breed vendors have come a long way, and have put a lot of time and focus on integration capabilities.

It’s important to fully evaluate all of your options, and to research the integration experience of each vendor. Some questions to consider include:

- What are your standard interfaces?
- What is your specific experience integrating with other systems? HIS and/or Ancillary?
- What would your clients say about your integration experience and can you provide testimonials or data to back this up?
- Can the system provide a single point of access for clinical information?

Did you know? Wellsoft EDIS is built to integrate with and enhance the value of HIS, other EHRs, HIEs and ancillary systems. It is also now offered as part of a larger, enterprise solution for hospitals through Medsphere.
In an industry where there is seemingly a lot of turmoil and consolidation, stability and reputation are key when evaluating vendors. You want an Emergency Department EHR vendor you can count on for the long-term, not just through implementation. Aside from their experience with similar healthcare organizations to your own, you should also assess their business history to ensure they have a solid reputation. The vendor should also be recognized as a leader in the industry. A few key things to look for:

- **Awards and Certifications** – this usually indicates they have a solid reputation and are focused on providing an excellent product

- **Client testimonials** – especially ones from industry reports like KLAS which are independent

- **Experience of staff** – low employee turnover and experienced staff are critical to ensuring a successful implementation and long-term relationship

- **Type of company** – whether it is public, private, or funded by venture capitalists can make a difference (For example: If a company was recently bought by a venture capital group, make sure to interview clients to see what changes, if any, have occurred in regards to the product and service.)

*Wellsoft has been recognized as the #1 Emergency Department Information System (EDIS) 14 times by KLAS Research. See how all Emergency Department EHR vendors stack up in the 2019 Best in KLAS: Software and Services Report for Emergency Departments.*
The right EDIS can have widespread and multilayered positive effects on the ROI of a hospital. Yet ROI on IT projects can be hard to forecast.

To help determine your potential ROI, a vendor should be able to provide you with a free in-depth ROI analysis during the sales process.

In general, some of the financial impacts (whether direct ones that can be measured to determine ROI or indirect ones with qualitative impact) of implementing an EDIS system include:

- **Increased Revenue** (the easiest and most obvious to calculate): This could take into account improved charge capture, tracking of infusion start/stop times, and/or real-time tools offering E&M professional coding capabilities.

- **Time Savings**: For order entry, documentation, ePrescribing, discharge instructions, etc. A decrease in clinician turnover time at the end of the shift could also translate to less overtime payout.

- **Productivity Improvements**: This can be harder to measure but may include reduced waiting times, elopements, triage times, and decreased overall length of stay (LOS) as a result of the utilization of various EDIS components.

**INSIDER’S TIP**

**Choosing a Best-of-Breed or Single Source HIS Enterprise**

A recent trend has been for EDs to be forced to accept the existing enterprise HIS vendor’s EDIS offering with little consideration for usability, functionality or potential productivity loss. An “apples-to-apples” ROI comparing the actual HIS vs. projected Best-of-Breed ROI after six months may reveal a compelling argument for one system over the other and convince the hospital to re-examine their strategy. Also, be careful of the “we can build that” promise that may cost thousands of professional services hours vs. the total cost of an EDIS solution that meets the EDs needs out of the box…”

*Source: “Best-of-Breed” vs “Single Source” HIS Enterprise Solutions for Emergency Department Information Systems by Todd B. Taylor, MD, FACEP.*

For a free ROI Assessment from Wellsoft, click here.
Different IT departments have different requirements, needs and preferences. While smaller hospitals with limited IT staff might prefer a hosted environment with most of the IT resources provided by the vendor, larger hospitals may prefer a client-server based platform that tightly integrates with other systems. The ED EHR vendor should be able to provide flexibility to support your hospital’s infrastructure and hardware plan.

A few other IT factors to keep in mind are:

- **What input devices can be used:** workstations, mobile, tablet, wireless, touchscreen, etc.

- **Deployment options:** thin client, web/cloud based, virtual environments and/or networked PCs

- **Scalability and flexibility of architecture:** Will it integrate with other systems well? How long does it take for customizations (minutes or days)?

- **Installation/implementation process:** How easy is it? How experienced are the implementation managers? How long will it take?

- **Maintenance:** Are there Remote Desktop Services and integrated system diagnostics? Is there system downtime with backups?
It’s probably safe to say we’ve all dealt with a company or two that had poor support — it’s frustrating, can be time-consuming, and can negatively impact you or your operation. In the search for vendors, people often overlook support and may not discover the real ramifications until it’s too late.

Support can be paramount to the success of your implementation and long-term EHR goals, so it’s important not to make the mistake of choosing an EHR vendor before understanding their support system. A few questions to consider:

- Is support available 24/7/365?
- What is the response time and is there a guarantee?
- What is the turnaround time for response and change requests?
- Is the support in-house or outsourced? Is it based in the U.S.?
- How is a support issue handled? Is there a ticketing system?
- How well do you feel you listen to client feedback? Can you tell me about a time where you incorporated client feedback into your product?
- What do your clients say about your support and can you provide specific examples?
- What types of support options do you offer your clients?
THE RIGHT EVALUATION TEAM AND THE RIGHT SOLUTION

You’ve undoubtedly worked hard to make sure the right players on your team are involved in the evaluation process. Emergency nurses and physicians, the ED director/manager, the CIO or IT department, CFOs and other administrators—all see things from different angles, and should be part of the evaluation team to help ensure you choose the right solution.

Whether you are part of a small rural hospital, a big city hospital, a hospital system, a freestanding emergency center (FEC), or something different – the right solution for you is the one that aligns with your specific goals and needs. A quick implementation, the right suite of features, and uptime/reliability of the solution may all factor into your decision.

Above all, you need to have trust in the EHR vendor that they can provide the right solutions, experience, support and commitment to help you improve productivity and revenue, and ultimately enhance the delivery of emergency care.
Want to see a demo of the #1 KLAS ranked Emergency Department EHR from Wellsoft? Click here.

Wellsoft EDIS is available as a stand-alone option, or as part of a larger enterprise solution for hospitals from Medsphere.

To learn more, visit wellsoft.com or call 800.597.9909.