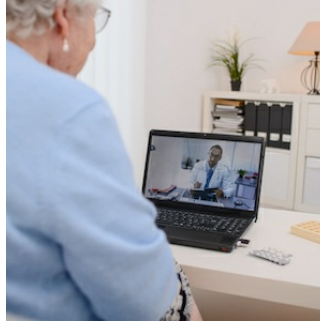

COVID-19: Effect on IT Purchasing Decisions



The flux of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) patients is pushing hospitals and other medical facilities to unprecedented limits. Such difficult circumstances are seen delaying current and future healthcare IT implementations.

For instance, limitations in IT-staff capacity are a major factor impacting IT purchases. Clinical informaticists – such as chief medical information officers and chief nursing information officers – are currently overwhelmed with the need to support their centres in managing the surge in COVID-19 patients.

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At the same time, health IT vendors are having problems supplying personnel to support implementations, with their employees forced to work from home under state governments' quarantine orders. To maintain momentum on its key projects, one vendor, Cerner, says it's focused on using virtual services to assist clients working on the frontlines of the pandemic.

With CMIOs and IT pros at healthcare systems feeling the brunt of the COVID-19 surge, the course of future implementations could also be impacted, according to [Bob Cash, vice president of provider relations for KLAS](#). As health IT executives currently "are being diverted from longer term strategies," Cash said this kind of distraction "will lead to (future) delays."

In addition, provider organisations may hesitate in making commitments to future implementations given financial pressures of dealing with the current crisis. This is mainly due to concerns about how hospitals, while doing their best to take care of the unwell, will be reimbursed for the extraordinary cost of care, including personnel and supplies that will be required.

"There's plenty of concern out there about the financial impact. We're seeing those conversations about 'Where can we delay an investment if we can safely do so?' Organisations are attempting to be wise and not harm their long-term vision," Cash said.

Growing Use of Telehealth and Collaboration Platforms

Still, industry experts have noted increasing investments in technology, particularly those that support telemedicine capabilities, which help providers deal with COVID-19 pressures. The pandemic has led to growing interest in telehealth services and communication and collaboration platforms, such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom, according to Jon Winsett, CEO of NPI, an IT spend-management consultancy.

The experts also say providers are trying to ramp up use of existing technology that's helping them increase efficiency or expand resources to manage anticipated service demands. For example, some hospitals are implementing new and [updated software from IT vendors to better manage patient loads](#).

These measures are helping providers that "have temporarily shifted priorities to address the critical needs of patients afflicted with COVID-19,

such as expanding current operating capacities and establishing field hospitals to prepare for the surge in patient volume," said Austin Cozzolino, Cerner's senior communication partner in corporate communications. Just recently, the company initiated 50 ICU expansions, and that work will likely grow as demand increases, Cozzolino added.

Source: [Healthcare IT News](#)

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