
Why Level of EHR Satisfaction Varies Amongst Doctors



Results of two recent surveys to gauge physicians' experience in using electronic health records (EHR) have revealed that, overall, physicians in large-group practices are having better EHR experiences compared to their colleagues in small and solo medical practices.

"Larger physician organisations are much more satisfied because of their resources and the offerings of larger EHR firms," said Doug Brown, managing partner of Black Book Market Research. "Smaller practices bought inexpensive and/or free EHRs for meaningful use incentives with little or no support."

In a survey conducted by Black Book, more than two thirds of physicians in large practices report satisfactory experiences in the second quarter of this year. In contrast, only 8 percent of physicians felt that way in 2013, according to the survey. Similar gains were seen in practice productivity (from 7 percent in 2013 to 68 percent in 2015) and physician documentation (from 10 percent to 63 percent).

The results differ with those of an American Medical Association (AMA) survey, which found that only 34 percent of physicians were satisfied with their EHR systems in 2014, down from 62 percent in 2010. The percentage of physicians unhappy with their system stood at 54 percent in 2014.

The AMA survey of 940 physicians also found that 72 percent of respondents said EHRs made it difficult to decrease their workload, 54 percent complained about higher operating costs, and 43 percent had not yet returned to their pre-EHR level of productivity.

"The AMA report is a reflection of solo and small group doctors and their staffs in a narrow, year-old slice of time and specialties," Brown said. "The Black Book survey is updated quarterly. We received 27,194 user responses in contrast with 940 for the [AMA] survey."

In a statement, the AMA defended its report saying the findings are "representative and consistent with what we have heard anecdotally from the vast majority of America's physicians."

The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) participated in the AMA survey. Steven Waldren, MD, director of the AAFP's Alliance for eHealth Innovation, said that it is understandable that larger practices have better experiences with EHRs. "They have greater resources and the ability to offload some of the administrative work from physicians," he noted.

Dr. Waldren also cited the lack of interoperability as a key driver of frustration with EHRs. "A large practice is more likely to be involved with a hospital or integrated delivery system. The doctors who refer patients back and forth to each other are more likely to be on the same systems than a solo doctor or one in a small practice," he added.

Sources: [American Medical Association](#); [Black Book Market Research](#)

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