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Selecting an Electronic

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The Key to Successful EHR Selection

Selecting an Electronic Health Record (EHR) is a daunting task. Although there are many EHR products currently on the market, there are no well-defined standards for judging their features or quality. Organisations interested in implementing an EHR must therefore provide their own standards for judging whether or not a product meets their needs. However, this task is not as difficult as it first may sound. The key to successful selection is to have a good idea of the objectives that the EHR should meet; knowing how the EHR will be used; a realistic idea of the organisation's available resources, and a formal process for identifying the key functions and features required to support the goals and objectives of the organisation.

The Selection Process Begins With Defining EHR Goals and Objectives

Vague objectives are a major reason for inappropriate product selection and for EHR implementation failures. Therefore, the EHR selection process should begin with a period of selfstudy in order to determine the major issues that are to be addressed with an EHR. During this process, it is very important to be specific. For example, having `improved quality` as a goal is quite admirable. However, determining if that goal has been reached can be quite difficult without specific guidelines. Stating that the EHR should allow the identification of all patients with a specific diagnosis provides a specific metric for both determining if your goal has been achieved after implementation as well as providing a means for judging between products during the selection process. Another way of thinking about this is that goals provide a high-level view of the clinical and business issues that the organisation wishes to address. Objectives, on the other hand, are metrics by which products are to be judged and their implementation success measured. For this reason, at least one month should be set aside to identify all important goals, objectives, problems, and issues.

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