What does Oracle-Cerner's Merger Mean for EHRs?

Oracle's $28.3 billion purchase of Cerner last month was one of the largest transactions in the health IT space with large implications for electronic health records.

Larry Ellison, Chairman and Chief Technology Officer of Oracle, stated that together, Cerner and Oracle can 'transform healthcare delivery by providing medical professionals with better information—enabling them to make better treatment decisions resulting in better patient outcomes' and 'provide our overworked medical professionals with a new generation of easier-to-use digital tools that enable access to information via a hands-free voice interface to secure cloud applications.' Meanwhile, Cerner CEO, Dr. David Feinberg said joining with Oracle offers 'an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate our work modernising electronic health records, improving the caregiver experience and enabling more connected, high-quality and efficient patient care.'

The top complaints physicians and nurses have with EHRs are that they are non-user friendly and time-intensive. Moving toward precision medicine presents an additional challenge since EHRs must also include more granular data like genomics.

Therefore, the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) asked several health system C-suite officers about this merger's implications. Many Cerner clients simply want electronic health records (EHRs) to continue to work well for them. The U.S. Veterans Health Administration said that it would continue to work with Oracle-Cerner, despite agency-specific challenges with implementation; they do not expect any impact on their current relationship.

Tressa Springmann, Chief Information and Digital Officer at LifeBridge Health, says that 'these types of transactions do have the potential to more quickly change a culture, accelerate resources, and make available technical research and development that might not otherwise have had the funding nor focus to mature as quickly.'

Jeri Koester, Chief Information Officer at Marshfield Clinic Health System, believes that Oracle-Cerner can capitalise on their domain expertise from other industries to accelerate EHR modernisation, bringing more automation, artificial intelligence, and machine learning.

Coray Tate, Vice President of Core Solutions and Interoperability at KLAS, points out that 'they definitely have resources that can be brought to bear' but cautions that their efforts will require focus.

One of this merger's most anticipated benefits is that Oracle expects to bring its voice-enabled AI tools to Cerner's EHR to streamline clinical workflows, along with its experience in cloud infrastructure.

Source: Oracle, HealthcareIT News (HIMSS)

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