bcc: consulting

INTEGRATING THE ART & SCIENCE OF HEALTHCARE

ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORD

EMR guide

for Small and Mid-Size Practices

Written with our partner

unlimitedPlus
information technology consulting

About bcc:

bcc: specializes in bringing clinician-focused technology to provider organizations. We do this by helping vendors fine-tune their offering(s) to better reach their intended market, and by helping providers understand what technology best matches their unique needs, and by helping them formulate successful implementation strategies. For more information, including additional publications and services, please visit **www.hitbcc.com**.

About Unlimited Plus

Unlimited Plus, LLC provides healthcare organizations with information technology consulting and managed support. With more than 30 healthcare organization clients throughout North and South Carolina, Unlimited Plus is rapidly establishing itself as the region's forefront service provider to the medical practice industry. For more information, including a detailed description of services, please visit **www.unlimitedplus.com**.

bcc:'s EMR Guide represents an enhancement to our clinician-focused resources. Until now, we have focused exclusively on mobile healthcare solutions. Over the last year, the demand for information about EMRs, particularly in the small and mid-size practice markets, has grown so substantially, that we feel compelled to broaden our resources to include an EMR dedicated resource guide.

Our goal with the new Guide remains unchanged—to help the diffusion of enabling technology amongst clinicians. Good market knowledge and information is needed to help assist the solo, small, and mid-sized practices sort through the myriad details of a very confusing and fragmented EMR market, not to mention the underlying technology of which most physicians are unfamiliar.

bcc:'s EMR Guide consists of a technology overview, bcc:'s Top EMRs for Small and Mid-Size Practices, and an inclusive directory of all known EMR vendors. While we wanted to simplify the search for EMR vendors across the board, we also endeavored to bootstrap the EMR selection process for those needing it most—the small and mid-size practices. Simply choosing one of our "Top" vendors will not ensure a great "deal," nor a great experience. Additional research and analysis is needed to understand the many ramifications of each solution.

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Finally, a few words of advise for those looking to implement an EMR:

1. Do your homework.
2. Understand the rudimentaries of the technology, at a minimum.
3. Do not delegate complete responsibility for this decision to someone else.
4. Be willing to spend money when and where appropriate—this will become the central nervous system and lifeline of your business.
5. Ask for, and be willing to pay for, good qualified help.
6. Be skeptical and challenge every solution that you see. When you have made your decision become its greatest champion and advocate internally.
7. Expect bumps in the road, and set expectations appropriately. When problems arise, deal with them.
8. The light at the end of the tunnel is not an oncoming train.

Happy hunting, and good luck!

We would like thank our **bcc: EMR Guide** sponsor for making this resource available:

bandwidth.com

We would also like thank our **bcc: Mobile Resource Guide** sponsors for also making this resource available:

ePOCRATES

IQMAX INTELLIGENT MOBILITY

MEDICWARE electronic medical records

MD TECHNOLOGIES

PocketMed

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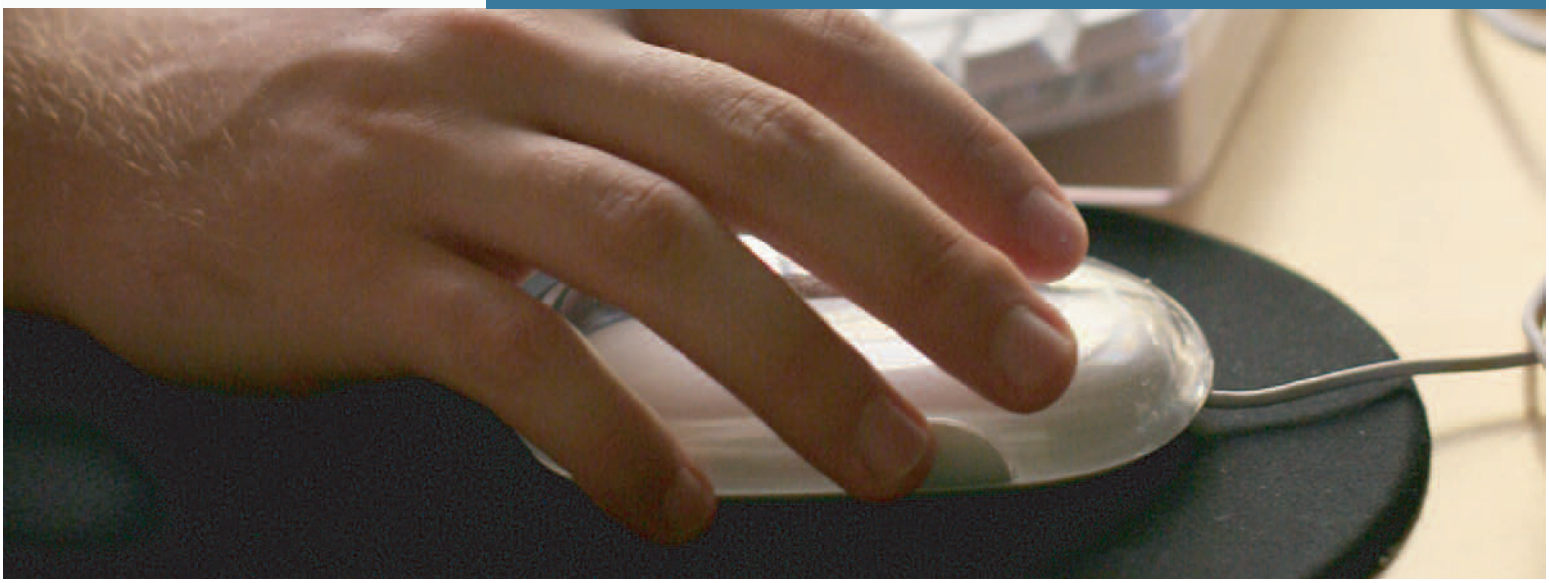
BUSINESS VOICE AND INTERNET



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for the Healthcare Industry

Call or contact us today to get a free network assessment that can help you best understand how a converged package of internet & voice connectivity can save you money-allow you to more reliably communicate with your labs, suppliers, insurance companies & patients.

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About Bandwidth.com

Bandwidth.com is the nation's complete provider for business telecom solutions offering advanced internet, network and VoIP services to small and medium sized business in all 50 states.

The firm started in 1999 with the vision to completely change the way that businesses bought telecom services. Frustrated by their own experiences in purchasing T1s, the firm's founders, David Morken and Henry Kaestner, set out to create a solution to the problem faced by most businesses nationwide: Carriers were focused more on building big networks, and as a result, had cut corners on customer service.

Bandwidth.com learned that businesses want immediate pricing, honest advice from technologically sound Account Executives, and complete accountability and transparency across all aspects of service from contracts, ordering, installation, activation, billing and ongoing customer service. Bandwidth.com delivers all of the above across a complete solution including Internet access, business class VoIP and network services.

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EMR guide

for Small and Mid-Size Practices

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Technology in the small to midsize medical practice

Know Your Network!

Whenever we assist providers with EMR selection, we stress the importance of separating hardware and networking issues from the software. Given that so few practices have a network per se, or even adequate hardware, prior to investing in an EMR, they are often assumed to be one and the same. They are not.

In fact, one of the greatest opportunities for savings is to manage your network yourself—or at least through a trusted organization other than your software vendor. Several of the top EMR vendors make substantial revenue off of network management. In addition to paying higher costs for unnecessary or more expensive hardware, and ongoing support fees, you are likely to end up with a network that is overly customized to your vendor, which only increases later switching costs.

While there are some software applications that require purchasing specific hardware, in general, you would not buy a new computer to run one specific software program. You should no sooner design and build your network around one specific software application. Some vendors might counter that in the case of your business-line, mission-critical applications, such as a PMS/EMR, your hardware and your network should follow your software purchase. Our response is that you must, of course, meet your vendor's minimum specifications, but be very leery of solutions that stray from plain vanilla hardware and network specs.

With today's technology, there is very little reason to invest in "specialized" network solutions. Furthermore, while today you probably cannot think of using your network beyond the scope of a PMS/EMR, you may be looking to leverage your network for other purposes in a matter of months let alone years. Do not paint yourself into a corner when configuring your network.

When you decide to purchase an EMR, accept the fact that you are making an investment in a network (or increasing an investment if you already have one). In most cases, the quality of your network will have far more to do with the success of your EMR implementation than the vendor you select. Furthermore, with a solid network in place, you will have far more ability and control to replace one vendor with another should the need arise. While clearly not your upfront intention, plan accordingly and take control of your own fate. We have seen far too many instances of practices who "locked" themselves into a bad vendor relationship.

Regardless of whether you build your network yourself or outsource the task to a trustworthy, certified network integrator (highly encouraged for 99% of physician practices), familiarize yourself with the key issues. Even if you do not plan to manage your own network, understanding the key issues will vastly improve your EMR vendor selection as well as make you a better overall practice manager, owner or partner.

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To help jump start that process, we have addressed a number of key hardware/network issues:

Foundation

The foundation of a high performance and reliable technology project is correct networking infrastructure. Do not cut corners or go cheap to save a few dollars.

Wiring

While you are likely planning to go wireless, keep in mind that no technology is infallable. Furthermore, networked medical devices, such as an integrated EKG, may require more up/down bandwidth than your wireless connection can support.

Even if you have not budgeted for network wiring, have it done. It will save you countless future migraines.

Prices for network wiring range dramatically, so shop around and even go outside of your general contractor and his subcontractors if necessary to find a good rate.

New Building or Retrofit

If you are building out a new space, make sure to hard-wire each area where patient interaction will occur. Additionally, consider coverage. While a single CAT-5 outlet in an exam room might seem appropriate, consider every use-case. If your physicians are using laptops or tablets, would a hard-wire connection require them to crawl behind a desk or exam table, or to drape a cable over a prone patient? Exam rooms may require multiple outlets with at least one placed waste-high on the wall.

Existing Building

If you are moving into an existing building that does not have adequate network wiring, have it installed. You may not want to install it in every room but make sure you have it at the reception desks (including drops for the network printer and other network peripherals), the nurses station, hallway, lab and offices. Also don't forget to have a drop run in the ceiling for a wireless access point (WAP), and make sure the WAP has a power source.

Server/Electronics Room

This is one area that practices frequently overlook. You need to dedicate a small room or closet for you server, telephone and other technology products. This room must be separately air conditioned and kept at around 70 degrees at all times. Do not let a contractor tell you an exhaust fan and vents on the door will work. It will not. Many companies make AC units for server closets and small spaces

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(sometimes called split wall units). Make sure you get one. A portable unit from APC costs around $1,200 (MSRP) and is worth every penny.

Network Switch

The network switch connects all of your computers, printers, servers, devices, and in some offices, even your Cisco IP phones. This is another area where being frugal is not advised. We recommend that you purchase a layer 2 managed switch with the desired number of ports. Your integrator will know what a layer 2 managed switch is, but in simple terms a layer 2 switch affords more flexibility and monitor-ability.

Network Firewall/VPN device

This is the device that protects your network from the Internet. It is also the device that allows virtual private network (VPN) connections for remote offices and at-home workers (think physician on-call, or finishing your notes at home after the kids are in bed rather than staying late at the office).

Your internet service provider (ISP) may provide you with a commercial level Firewall/VPN/Router but they may charge for it. DSL and cable companies generally provide low-grade devices that are not up to the task. Augment these with a true commercial quality Firewall/VPN device. We like the Cisco PIX series and the Zyxel ZyWall line. If you have a T1 or other dedicated connection your service provider likely already includes a high-end device.

Wireless Access Points (WAPs)

The type of WAP your practice needs is not likely available at the local big box electronics stores, such as Best Buy or Circuit City. Commercial grade WAPs are expensive but are worth it for their scalability, performance, reliability and security. We currently like the industry standard Cisco Aironet Series but there are other high-quality commercial products starting to appear.

Computers/Workstations/Tablets

We strongly encourage you to buy your computers directly from the vendor. The basic requirements for PMS/EMR products are nearly universal, and generally below any plain vanilla business quality computer sold within the last 12 months.

As with most technology products, the life-span of workstations is approximately 3 years. Stay away from custom built mom and pop computers and purchase from reputable national retailers. It has been our experience that local mom and pop shops do not have the resources to support customers 24/7 and many go out of business before the warranty. Dell, IBM (Lenovo), and HP top our list of preferred vendors. In addition to a 2-3 year warranty, we recommend the following minimum specifications:

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Workstations
Pentium 4 Processor 2.8 GHZ (No Celeron)
512 MB or Ram
20 GB HD
10/100 network card
15” Flat panel Monitor

Tablets
Convertible or Slate
1.2 GHZ or faster processor (Pentium M preferred)
512 Ram
20 GB HD
Built in 802.11 b/g (Wireless networking)

Servers
Servers can be very PMS/EMR specific. Some vendor’s software can run on relatively modest server hardware, while others require multiple high-end servers. We recommend that you get the requirements for the server as specified by your chosen PMS/EMR vendor, and with the help of your integrator, price compare purchasing the same machine from different vendors. On average you will probably save at least 20% by shopping wisely.

Protection

Integrator / Consultant
The number one asset in protecting your network is developing a relationship with a vendor neutral technology integrator/consultant. They can help you find the best deals, design the best networks, help you scale as your practice grows and provide support when you need it. Make sure your integrator/consultant has healthcare specific experience. Ask for references, and follow up with them.

Data backups
Backing up your data is critical to you being able to recover from a natural, man-made or human-error disaster. HIPAA and many insurance agencies now require that you have in place a disaster recovery plan that includes data backup. We recommend that you backup you data daily and store backups off site. Backing up your data can even be automated over the internet. Work with only reputable companies if you choose to backup over the Internet. In general, your PMS/EMR vendor and your ISP are good sources for reliable internet based backup services, as both likely resell these services from proven data-recovery software firms.

Power Protection
Make sure your critical infrastructure is protected from power interruptions with a commercial grade uninterruptible power supply.

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Again commercial grade is key. The type of protection your servers and key networking and telecom components need is often not sold at big box electronic stores. You should purchase a battery that provides at least 20 minutes of runtime and software that will safely shut down your system when power is exhausted. We recommend that you work with your integrator to insure that everything works correctly.

Anti-Virus System Management

Your IT integrator will help you choose a commercial level anti-virus utility that fits your network. Commercial/enterprise additions of popular products like Norton and Trend Micro provide features that businesses need, such as policy enforcement and centralized management.

Your IT integrator/consultant should also work with you to develop a scheduled maintenance and support plan for your network. Regular and consistent maintenance will ensure that your network runs smoothly, as well as allow you to sleep better at night.

We hope that this brief overview gives you a flavor of the many challenges related to implementing your PMS/EMR. This list is by no means exhaustive, nor is each area explained completely. You should be aware of the major issues and considerations, but—again—in the vast majority of cases your practice should employ the help and services of a vendor-neutral, qualified system integrator.

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What is an ASP?

An ASP is an Application Service Provider. Application service providers sell software as a service that you rent or lease. You never actually own a perpetual license, rather you pay for the right to use the application for a period of time. This type of model is also called software as a service.

Many vendors are now starting to offer ASP versions of their applications. While the ASP model may work best for your wallet, it may not be the best solution for your practice or for your particular EMR of choice.

The truth is that only a limited number of applications on the market today were designed in a way to work best in an ASP model. Many vendors are taking their legacy applications into the ASP world using products like Citrix MetaFrame and Windows Terminal Servers. For the most part, these implementations are not optimal because they were applications originally designed to be run completely on local workstations and servers. The functionality originally designed in the product may suffer. Oftentimes functions like digital document management (scanning of documents) and lab integration may not work completely.

ASP Benefits

Using an ASP has many benefits. Because the servers are hosted by the provider you don't have to invest in expensive servers. This will save you money and should result in a faster implementation.

Because the server is hosted remotely, the ASP provider normally provides data backup and redundancy. The ASP provider also manages the servers and provides support for the servers—an otherwise daunting responsibility for most solo and small practices.

ASP Potential Problems

Because of their nature, ASP models depend on clients having reliable internet connectivity. This means that simple DSL and Cable broadband packages may not be adequate. While services offered by the likes of Time Warner Cable or Vonage may provide you with enough intermittent bandwidth, they will not come with a Service Level Agreement (SLA).

In order to get guaranteed connection speeds and availability, you may need to invest in more expensive offerings, such as a partial or dedicated T1 that include an SLA. (DSL and business-class Cable are often sold on a best effort and not a guaranteed connectivity speed or availability.) Also you may want to get a backup provider for internet connectivity in case your primary provider's connection is unavailable. Business class Cable or DSL will suffice for this purpose. However, be mindful because most T1 lines and DSL lines use the same network, in which case, using a DSL line as a backup for a T1 provides almost no additional value or protection.

Finally, be aware of the biggest secret ASP providers don't want you to know—oversubscription. Oftentimes, ASP providers place more users on a server than it can support under the hope that everyone will not be using the service at the same time. This is a common practice in the industry. The problems occur when the ASP does not have the resources to support all requests. This can be either the ASP's servers being used to capacity or the ASP's internet connection being saturated. Make sure you get an SLA with any vendor before signing up for an ASP product.

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Unified Voice and Data

It's more than a catchy slogan for new long distance services. Unified Voice and Data is the combining of your internet (data) and phone service (voice) into a single pipe, and for many medical offices it can result in huge savings.

The concept has been around for many years but until recently it rarely resulted in large savings. Many companies have been attempting to sell T1 voice and data lines that split the voice component into designated channels. Despite sharing the same line, the voice service operates like a typical phone service with very few additional features and with the same pricing structure as a traditional phone company. In other words, you are still billed for every feature and option, and you still have to manage your own phone system onsite.

By harnessing the power of the internet, a new breed of companies is using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) combined with dedicated internet access lines and hosted phone systems to deliver a unified voice and data package. When implemented correctly, a VoIP-based voice and data carrier can save your office thousands of dollars a year not only on voice toll charges but also maintenance contracts and equipment associated with expensive phone systems.

How does it work?

VoIP phone companies provide your office with dedicated internet connectivity for voice and data services. Using this pipe, all of your voice calls are transmitted via the internet to your provider's equipment where it is then routed to its final destination. Because the VoIP provider also hosts your phone system, they can provide advanced features like automated attendants, smart voicemail, and music on hold for a fraction of the cost of buying and supporting your own in-office phone system.

Who is it best for?

Hosted VoIP solutions work best when they are combined with smart, internet-based desktop phones. These high tech phones are comparable in price to regular digital handsets from the phone company. Because many small practices do not have a significant investment in legacy phone systems, moving to a VoIP provider is relatively simple and cost effective. New offices should give serious consideration to unified voice and data services before investing in traditional services.

What if I already have a phone system?

If you already have a phone system in which you have made a significant investment, VoIP providers may still have an option for you. By placing the appropriate router in your office, they can convert VoIP signals into a format that can be handled by your existing phone system. They, in effect, are delivering your dial tone similar to what the phone company does, except their signals travel over the internet. Keep in mind, however, that you will almost certainly lose some of the benefits and features of their hosted offering.

So how much can I save?

A lot. For instance, we saw one small office that was paying over $1,000 a month for a phone system (hardware and maintenance) and non-dedicated internet access decrease their monthly voice and data bill to $550. If you have multiple locations and/or a high number of lines your savings could be dramatically higher.

As always, seek outside advice from you trusted technology consultant or integrator and deal with reputable companies. Remember all the savings in the world does not matter much if you can't make and receive phone calls reliably.

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bcc:'s Top EMRs for Small and Mid-Size Practices

Methodology

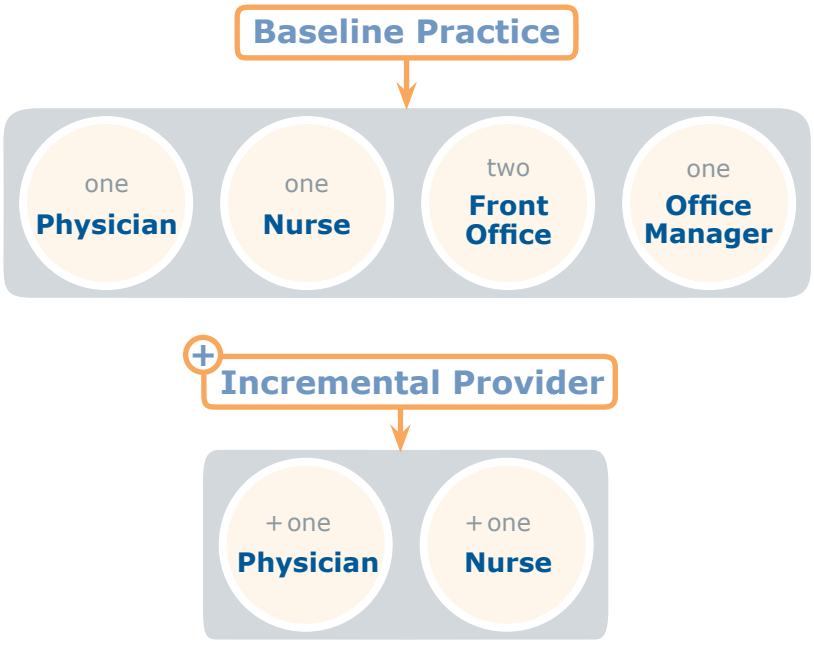
While there are numerous issues affecting a practice's decision to embrace EMR technology, we have attempted to simplify the comparison of EMR solutions across bcc:'s Top EMRs.

To begin with, we assume a practice that is purchasing an onsite client/server-based EMR for the first time (either with or without an existing practice management system), with no legacy EMR conversion issues. We then establish a "baseline" practice—assuming a single provider, a nurse/medial assistant, two front-officempersonnel, and an office manager/biller.

To help practices "build" from the baseline to a larger, multi-provider practice, we include the "incremental provider," which includes an additional provider as well as one ancillary staff. In other words, the cost of an EMR for a three provider practice can be approximated by adding two incremental providers to the baseline case.

We recognize that this approach is not perfect. For one thing, as practices begin to scale beyond five physicians, a more robust server is needed. And again beyond ten providers. Furthermore, the staffing dynamics begin to shift as a practice grows to different sizes.

Nevertheless, we believe this methodology allows the greatest number of providers to accurately assess the cost impact of investing in an EMR, both generally (from a hardware and networking perspective), as well as specifically (depending on which vendor a practice selects).



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Determining your hardware and networking costs

	Baseline			+ Incremental		
	Quantity	Cost	Sub-Total	Quantity	Cost	Sub-Total
Hardware						
Server* (with back-up)	1	$3,500	$3,500	Additional client licenses?		
Dual Processor; RAID-1; 2 GB of RAM; Optical Drive Windows Server 2003 with 5-client license						
Physician Client	1	$1,900	$1,900	1	$1,900	$1,900
Tablet or Laptop with touch screen, wireless, Windows XP Professional						
Client Workstations	4	$900	$3,600	1	$900	$900
2.8 GHz (Pentium Preferred), 20 GB Hard drive; 10/100 Ethernet card; Windows XP Professional; Flat-panel monitor						
Networking						
Switch	1	$800	$800			
Layer 2 managed, 24 port 10/100 switch w/ 2 Gigabit Ethernet ports (QOS, vLAN support preferred)						
VPN/Firewall	1	$400	$400			
AntiVirus (server-based)	1	$500	$500			
Assumed:						
High-speed internet (DSL, Cable, T1)						
Ethernet wiring or Wi-Fi enabled PCs						
Total			**$10,700***			**$2,800**

***ASP**

Same Hardware/Networking requirements as Client/Server, except no Server.

Total Baseline Cost: $7,200

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	Client/Server																				ASP
	EMR										EMR/PMS										
	Direct License	H/W & Networking	Server OS/DB	File Build	3rd Party Licenses	PMS Integration	Training	Maint. & Support	True Baseline	True Incremental	Direct License	H/W & Networking	Server OS/DB	File Build	3rd Party Licenses	Integration Type	Training	Maint. & Support	True Baseline	True Incremental	ASP Offered?
Spring Charts	L	-	-	NA	NA	-	-	•	12-15k	4-5k	PMS solution not offered										No
MediNotes	L	-	-	NA	NA	-	-	•	15-20k	4-5k	PMS solution not offered										No
eClinicalWorks	U	•	•	NA	•	+	•	•	24-26k	7-8k	U	•	•	NA	•	T	•	•	22-24k	7-8k	Yes
e-MDs	L	+	+	+	+	•	+	+	28-30k	6-8k	L	+	+	+	+	T	+	+	32-36k	9-11k	No
PMSI	L	•	+	+	+	•	+	-	28-30k	10-11k	L	•	+	+	+	T	+	-	32-36k	13-15k	Yes
Allscripts (*TouchChart*)	L	•	+	NA	+	+	+	•	28-30k	10-11k	PMS solution not offered										No
MedicWare MRG Sponsor	L	•	+	NA	+	+	+	+	30-34k	7-8k	PMS solution not offered										Yes
Companion Technologies	L	+	+	+	+	+	+	•	30-40k	8-10k	L	+	+	+	+	T	+	•	50-60k	10-12k	No
iMedica	L	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	30-40k	10-12k	L	+	+	+	+	T	+	+	50-60k	14-16k	No
Misys	L	+	+	+	•	+	•	•	35-40k	10-11k	L	+	+	+	+	P	•	•	55-65k	14-16k	No
NextGen	L	+	+	+	+	+	•	•	40-50k	10-11k	L	+	+	+	+	T	•	•	50-60k	14-16k	Yes
GE Healthcare	L	+	+	+	+	+	+	•	40-50k	10-11k	L	+	+	+	+	P	+	•	55-65k	14-16k	No
Alteer	L	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	40-50k	10-11k	L	+	+	+	+	T	+	+	50-60k	10-12k	No
A4	L	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	50-60k	10-11k	L	+	+	+	+	P	+	+	70-80k	16-17k	No
SynaMed	Only ASP solution offered										Only ASP solution offered										Yes

- • Within scope of baseline
- – Less expensive than baseline
- \+ More than baseline

Direct License
- **L** Fixed/Limited number of support staff per physician license
- **U** Unlimited number of support staff

H/W & Networking (see above)

Server OS/DB
Assume either no separate third party OS and database costs, or costs included in base license fee

3rd Party License
(not including database licensing)
Baseline assumption is that no additional license fees required.

PMS Integration
Industry standard $3,000 (baseline)

Training
Industry standard $3,000 (baseline)

Maintenance/Support
Industry standard 18%

True Cost (Baseline/Incremental)
Soup-to-nuts cost of implementing system, including hardware, networking, licensing, 3rd party s/w, etc.

Integration Type (EMR/PMS)
- **T** Truly integrated (i.e. single database)
- **P** Patched via HL7 or other interface

Lab, hospital, and other interfaces not included.
Integrated EKG, spirometer and other devices not included.

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Directory

Directory Key:

Company
Parent Company
EMR Product
Address, Country and Phone
Website

A4 Health Systems
HealthMatics EMR
5501 Dillard Drive
Cary, NC 275111
USA
888.672.3282
www.a4healthsystems.com

Accumedic Computer Systems, Inc.
AccuMed
11 Grace Avenue
Suite 401
Great Neck, NY 11021
USA
800.765.9300
www.accumedic.com

AcerMed, Inc.
AcerMed EMR
135 Technology Drive
Suite 200
Irvine, CA 92618
USA
800.841.0008
www.acermed.com

Acrendo Software, Inc.
A.I.med
1010 University Avenue
San Diego, CA 92103
USA
800.403.2330
www.acrendo.com

activeMD Systems
NoteLogix
P.O. Box 656
Marietta, GA 30061
USA
770.362.9200
www.activemd.com

Addison Health Systems
WritePad
4823 Broadway Street
Addison, TX 75001
USA
800.496.2001
www.writepad.com

AdvancedMD Software, Inc.
AdvancedMD
11781 South Lone Peak Pkwy
Suite 110
Draper, UT 84020
USA
888.700.9060
www.advancedmd.com

AllMeds, Inc.
AllMeds EMR
151 Lafayette Drive
Suite 401
Oak Ridge, TN 37830
USA
888.343.MEDS
www.allmeds.com

Allscripts, LLC
TouchWorks & TouchChart
222 Merchandise Mart Plaza
Suite 2024
Chicago, IL 60654
USA
800.654.0889
www.allscripts.com

AltaPoint Data Systems, LLC
AltaPoint EMR
1100 East South Union Park Ave.
Midvale, UT 84047
USA
888.258.2552
www.altapoint.com

Alteer
Alteer Premiere
4 Venture
Suite 100
Irvine, CA 92618
USA
949.789.0500
www.alteer.com

AmazingCharts.com, Inc.
Amazing Charts
1111 Main Street
Hope Valley, RI 02832
USA
866.903.0821
www.amazingcharts.com

American Medical Records
eMRimaging
888.894.4819
www.americanmedicalrecords.com

American Medical Software
Electronic Patient Charts
1180 South State Highway 15
PO Box 236
Edwardsville, IL 62025-0236
USA
800.423.8836
www.americanmedical.com

Amicore
Amicore Integrated Management
200 Minuteman Road
Andover, MA 01810
USA
800.568.1528
www.amicore.com

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AmkaiCharts
255 Bank Street
Floor 2B
Waterbury, CT 06702
USA
866.265.2434
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