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Oregon Doctors Outpace Nation in EHR Adoption, Study Finds



Clinicians in Oregon are 81% more likely than the national average to have adopted electronic health records, according to a recent study on EHR use at ambulatory clinics in Oregon, the *Portland Business Journal* reports.

The study found that 53% of Oregon health care providers have adopted EHRs, compared with 29.2% of office-based, nonfederal medical providers nationwide in 2006.

However, the study also found that one-third of Oregon clinicians are using EHR systems not certified by the Certification Commission for Healthcare IT.

"Certification ensures that all the systems speak the same language," Brad Hall -- project manager at Acumenta Health, an Oregon not-for-profit dedicated to boosting the quality and effectiveness of health care -- said. He added, "It's great that clinics have an EHR, but unless they can talk to each other and share information, the true gains from EHRs won't be realized."

A separate study found that investing \$500 million in health care IT would reduce spending by between \$1 billion and \$1.3 billion annually in Oregon, but only if providers adoption comprehensive EHRs that are interoperable, fully functioning and have electronic prescription capabilities.

Theories

Industry experts offered a number of reasons for Oregon's rapid adoption of EHRs, including:

- Early adoption by health systems such as Kaiser Permanente Northwest and the Portland VA Medical Center's might have spurred similar action among clinics;
- The state has supported and grown some health informatics companies;
- Oregon Health & Science University's medical informatics program produces graduates who can help digitize health care; and
- Independent physician associations are helping small and midsize medical practices with discounts for EHRs through group purchasing agreements, as well as establishing programs to share the technical support costs between practices (Moody, *Portland Business Journal*, 12/17).

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