EHR Shopping List

How can you be sure you are buying the right PM/EHR solution for your pediatric practice?

Taking a detailed and strategic approach to EHR vendor selection is the most critical step - whether it's your first system or you're replacing your old one.

You want to shop for a solution that will help you remain independent and profitable, while doing what you know best: practicing pediatric medicine. PCC can provide you with some valuable insights as you review your options. Let's start with some background work:

Determine what you like and dislike about your existing EHR
Evaluate a new system by its abilities to address your pediatric practice pain points, while retaining the right workflow right for you.

What about your staff?
It is important to understand any issues and bottlenecks on the practice management side; selecting a solution that highlights speed, accuracy, and elimination of bottlenecks will be key.

Do your homework
Many vendors offer combined practice management and EHR software, however, you want to be certain to select a vendor that is best suited for your pediatric practice. Look for features and tools that support your workflow. Your vendors' websites should provide you with enough information to build a checklist.
When you have completed your homework, request a demo – this can often be done directly from a vendor's website.

Learn about the true cost of the solution
You will find different pricing and pricing methodologies for PM/EHR offerings. The key information to obtain is the true and total cost of the solution to you. Make sure you will not be "nickled and dimed" for services, integrations or companion products. Ask for transparent pricing, an extensive client list to contact, and inquire about the percent of revenue the total cost equates to – this will give you a lot of insight, as the cost should not exceed more than X%.

What lies ahead?
Many changes are underway in healthcare and in Pediatrics specifically; work with a vendor who has a proven track record and who can demonstrate that they are adaptive to the many changes underway. Ask for a product roadmap or insight into the future of the product that you were reviewing.

We worked with one of our clients in the PCC family to create this guide to use when evaluating PM/EHR vendors for your pediatric practice and identified 9 areas to include in your RFP or to discuss during your research phase:

1. Price
2. Training
3. Customer Service
4. The Practice Management System
5. The Electronic Health Record
6. Contract
7. The Company History
8. Practice Management Experience
9. Key Functionality

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Here are the relevant questions to ask:

Price

- What is the upfront cost? What is "included" in these costs? Are there extra costs?
- Do they offer a server-based, cloud based, or both, product?
- What are the ongoing maintenance and licensing costs?
- Do they offer revenue management (i.e., a billing service)? If so, how much do they charge? Is it a fixed or variable %? Is there a minimum monthly $$ amount for revenue management services? Do they perform all of the billing service functions or just some?
- How much training is included? If more training is needed, how much does it cost?
- What hardware is provided by the vendor?
- Will the company pay for third party software licensing?
- Who manages your EHR network? What is the expense for that work?
- Which clearinghouses does the PMS use-are those charges "included" or "extra?" Do you have to choose the clearinghouse? Is insurance eligibility included, or extra? What about ERA (Electronic Remittance Advice)?
- What are the fees to access PCMH (Patient Centered Medical Home)?
- Do they offer a patient portal? What are the expenses?
- Is there a monthly expense for e-prescribing? For controlled substances?
- What is the cost of data conversion? What does the data conversion include?
- Are there fees for ICD10 upgrades, licensing, and training?
- How much do they charge to do customized templates or reports?
- Are there fees for evening or weekend support calls?
- What are the expenses to interface with labs/state registries? Is this a one time set-up charge, or ongoing expense?

Training

- When will training occur? Is there followup training?
- Will it be onsite, or remote?
- How many trainers will be assigned to the office?
- If doing both a PMS and EHR, will all training be at once, or will there be a stepwise approach?
- How much training time do we receive?
- Who trains my new employees?
- How are we trained about new releases?
- Do they have an annual users conference? Is it free?
- Do they have an online resource for training purposes?
- Is there a support forum for users to access?

Customer Service

- When is customer service available?
- Do you have to pay for different levels of service?
- What time zone are these hours based on? Where is their customer service based?
- What if there is an emergency outside of these posted hours?
- What is the expected turnaround time for a service request?
- In cases of natural disasters, what assistance do they provide? What are the fees?

The Practice Management System

- Get a review of a claim's life cycle as it goes through their PMS system, from start to finish. Learn where the vendor hands off responsibility of your claims to third parties and where you have to be most vigilant.
- What is their electronic claims acceptance rate?
- Is this a family-based PMS or does it assume every patient is a little adult?
- Does it understand complex family relationships?

The Electronic Health Record

- What is their current percentage of pediatric clients?
- What are the sizes of their pediatric practices?
- Are their pediatricians part of a larger hospital system or multi-specialty group?
- Have they qualified for "auto-credits" for PCMH certification? How many?
- Ask to see their "out of the box" peds specific templates.
- Share any present templates that you like and have them walk you through how to create the same on their system.
- How are they integrated with Bright Futures?
- Can you open multiple charts at once?
- Does clinical information move from sibling to sibling, as appropriate?
- What is the fee to create school/camp forms for your state?
- How does the vendor react to special requests?
- What kind of support and advice are they going to offer to help you transition from paper to electronic charts?

The Contract

- If this isn't the right EHR for you, what are your options?
- How will your data be provided to you if you leave?
- What will the charges be? How quickly will they get you the data?
- What happens if the company "dies," or is sold to another company?

The Company History

- How many mergers/acquisitions/buy-outs/name changes has the vendor gone through?
- Are there plans now, or in the foreseeable future, to merge with/acquire/sell out to another company?
- What is their level of understanding of pediatrics?
- What is their level of participation in pediatric endeavors? How do they support the AAP on a national or local basis?

Practice Management Experience

- Do they offer a working dashboard or any kind of practice management or clinical benchmarking?
- Do they offer consulting of any kind? Clinical flow management and advice? What consulting services have fees?
- Do they provide support and assistance for PCMH?

Functionality

- Do they have a powerful online portal?
- An easy scheduling solution with automated reminders?
- Robust financial reporting
- True interoperability
- PCMH support
- Scalability and painless upgrades
- Vendor staying power
- Multi-provider, multi-location support
- Compliance for all regulatory requirements

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