

## Health systems underestimate time, cost of EMR rollouts

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NEW YORK – As hospitals and health systems across the country grapple with achieving meaningful use of electronic medical records, Accenture is the latest to offer a survey on how hospitals are progressing. This one is a survey of CIOs from health systems with advanced use of EMRs, and one of the key findings is that most health systems underestimate the time and cost of implementation.

The results, say Accenture executives, suggest that hospitals leaders must think and act differently to drive successful EMR implementation and clinical transformation. Change management is as critical to success as information technology planning and execution.

Less than 1 percent of health systems achieved mature use of EMRs in 2009 and, by Accenture's estimate, roughly 50 percent of U.S. hospitals are at risk of not meeting the demands of the federal requirements and incurring penalties by 2015. Medicare-based penalties to be imposed as a part of healthcare reform are estimated at \$3 million to \$4 million a year for a 500-bed hospital, making implementation a primary concern for many hospital executives.

"Meaningful use of EMRs is often wrongly characterized as a check-the-box qualification for stimulus monies," said Mark Knickrehm, global managing director, Accenture Health Practice. "But, this survey shows that exemplary hospital CIOs and health systems are changing the way technology is used to deliver healthcare. From strategic planning, staffing and adoption, health systems are integrating technology at a previously unprecedented level, but many health systems are lagging and at risk of facing penalties."

Other key findings from the Accenture survey:

- Hospitals can expect spikes in operating costs over the course of the EMR journey. Benchmarking shows that hospitals experience an 80 percent increase in IT operating expenses while transitioning to EMRs.
- When it comes to healthcare IT resources to support EMR implementation, there is a significant gap in qualified personnel. Over the next year, it is estimated that 90 percent of hospitals will invest to install/upgrade EMRs, driving even greater competition for top IT talent.
- True EMR success means working and thinking differently to optimize the investment over the long term.

"We realized early on that achieving meaningful use by successfully implementing EMRs means that no one person in the healthcare delivery chain is exempt from being EMR savvy," said Marc Probst, CIO of Intermountain Healthcare in Salt Lake City. "From physicians to technicians, every individual plays a role in creating an electronic record that will have meaningful impact on patient care."

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