





## An Introduction to EHR and HIE.

Physicians and other medical providers are in the process of converting paper health record systems to an electronic health record (EHR) system. Many other industries, such as banking, have already made the transition to digital records.

Providers with electronic health records can join networks for health information exchange (HIE). These networks give providers the ability to electronically transmit an individual's health records. Eventually, a single health record can be developed for a person with multiple physicians.

These advancements will make the health care delivery system more efficient. The number of duplicated medical tests can be reduced. Patients with chronic medical conditions can be managed better.

Similar to paper records, EHRs are subject to state and federal privacy protections, such as HIPAA.

## Quick Retrieval

Storing health records electronically allows for quick retrieval of patient information by physicians and clinical staff wherever and whenever necessary. This electronic system ensures that information about each patient is accessible and complete whenever a physician must make a treatment decision. Electronic health records also are easy for searching, tracking and analyzing information. Unlike paper records, they are not bulky, don't take up costly space, and don't require labor-intensive methods to maintain, retrieve and file.

Physicians can send reminders about scheduled tests, review all test results and establish better profiles of each patient's health.

## EHR Patient Benefits

For example, Mary Smith is age 62. She is a diabetic, and her primary care physician has an EHR system. Each time she visits the office, the physician can determine quickly if her lab values are correct and whether she has been compliant with her treatment plan.

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George Harris is age 60, and each year he goes to his doctor for a physical. Every year he has a PSA test for prostate cancer. His physician has electronic health records. As a result, it is easy for the doctor to determine how this year's results compare to last year's results. No longer must the physician have his staff search through paper files.

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Johnny Bays is 6 years old. His mother and father both work multiple jobs. His doctor has an electronic health record system. As a result, the doctor is able to send reminders to Johnny's parents when a pediatric visit is needed, making it convenient for his parents to remember his appointments. Therefore, Johnny gets the care he needs.



## Efficient **Health Care** Delivery

Electronic health records, in conjunction with health information exchange (HIE), improve the clinical quality and make the health care delivery system more efficient. Currently, some patients who have multiple physicians and other health care providers undergo many duplicative tests. In many instances, providers do not have an efficient way to share medical test results.

If a community has an HIE network, providers will be able to access a patient's complete health records to determine medications that have been prescribed and X-rays or other tests that may have been ordered.

In times of emergency, the treating emergency room physician would be able to use a computer terminal to access an injured patient's health records instead of attempting to track down the patient's primary care physician in the middle of the night.

## Safety **Backups**

EHRs offer a safety feature that is not available with paper records. Electronic copies, known as backups, can be easily made and stored off site.

In the case of flood, fire or other natural disasters, a physician's office can be destroyed. Backed-up electronic records permit a smoother recovery than paper records do.

A physician who has an electronic system with regular backups will be able to re-establish the office with all patient and financial records intact. This is good for patient care and the financial well-being of the medical practice.

## Privacy and **Security**

These new advancements in health record technology raise questions about privacy and security. Consumers may be concerned that someone might be able to hack into health systems to gain access to private health information.

Federal and state privacy laws such as HIPAA are designed to protect both paper and electronic health records. Systems must be designed to meet these stringent requirements. Any certified electronic system must be password protected and able to be encoded so that only authorized individuals can read the health records.

Unlike with paper health records, a log is created every time someone views an electronic health record. In addition, access to certain parts of health records can be restricted by password and system design.

For more information on privacy, visit our Web site: [www.eHealthWV.org](http://www.eHealthWV.org).





## Privacy and Security Principles

Federal and state privacy laws, such as HIPAA, are designed to protect both paper and electronic health records. Systems must be designed to meet these stringent requirements:

- Individuals should know how their personally identifiable health information may be used and who has access to it.
- Individuals should have control over whether and how their personally identifiable health information is shared.
- Systems must protect the integrity, privacy, security and confidentiality of an individual's information.
- The governance and administration of electronic health information exchange networks should be transparent and publicly accountable.

[www.eHealthWV.org](http://www.eHealthWV.org)



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