

Why Use The OpenEMR?

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In their search for an affordable and practical EMR solution, many practices have heard about the OpenEMR, a free downloadable EMR certified for Meaningful Use and currently used all over the world. A democratic open-source software, the OpenEMR is downloaded 3,700 times a month and constantly improved by an international team of programmers and developers. So how did this project get started, and how can using the OpenEMR benefit your practice?

The OpenEMR was originally released to the public in 2002 through the OEMR Foundation, a nonprofit group with a mission to provide electronic medical record software for all patients regardless of location or socioeconomic status. As a worldwide system, it was designed to be robust, flexible, and easy to use by doctors from New York City to rural Africa. Since its release, the number of OpenEMR users has grown quickly; SourceForge, an open-source site, reports that the OpenEMR is downloaded 3,700 times a month. The OpenEMR is used by practices in the U.S., Sweden, Israel, India, Puerto Rico, Australia, and Kenya, and is considered so integral to worldwide healthcare that the Peace Corps will begin using it in 2013. Templates can be easily customized for specialties using the OpenEMR, making it even more flexible.

So why should your practice use the OpenEMR? There are a few important reasons. The first is that because it's open-source software, programmers and physicians all over the world are constantly updating and improving the code. Additional software is also donated by major companies as well, making the OpenEMR an outstanding and best-in-class system. Because it's not a private company, you don't have to worry about the vendor going out of business or being unable to meet Meaningful Use Stage 2 requirements.

The OpenEMR is also relatively risk-free; when doctors switch EMRs, they are typically charged tens of thousands of dollars to migrate their data because the vendor doesn't want them to leave. But data migration is easier and cheaper for the OpenEMR because no single company has an interest in holding your data hostage.

The OpenEMR is also the best free EMR for busy doctors seeking to save time or rural clinics which don't always have reliable Internet access. Many free EMRs are web-based and require huge amounts of bandwidth, slowing down computer programs. Furthermore, these free EMRs assume that all practices have high-speed Internet, which isn't always the case; of America's 4,000 rural clinics, many do not have reliable Internet. The OpenEMR can be downloaded easily and operated on a clinic server, which is a terrific option for rural practices all over the world.

Lastly, it's an EMR which provides doctors with independence. By downloading and integrating an OpenEMR, practices now own their electronic medical records

system- and their own practice data. There's no worry about having data sold, traded, or viewed by a large corporation, and no fear about practice data held hostage if the doctors want to switch to another vendor. In a changing age, using the OpenEMR is one less thing to worry about.