

# Leveraging the EHR for population health management

The electronic health record (EHR) is likely the single best tool that we have to drive population health initiatives. Why is that? Because virtually every provider interacts with and every patient has health data captured in an EHR, and the types of data we are capturing are more comprehensive than the data available from prior sources.

## *Consider optimal ways to impact population health using the EHR.*

Even though the EHR can be an indispensable tool for population health initiatives, its potential hasn't been fully realized due to some significant limitations. Most notably, there are many different EHR products on the market and they are generally unable to share data easily. While incremental improvements have been achieved in this area, true interoperability remains the holy grail of health information technology.

An additional limitation has been a lack of ingenuity regarding how to impact population health using the EHR. Early efforts consisted primarily of decision-support tools that pop up on the provider side when criteria are flagged. This has resulted in a widely acknowledged "alert fatigue," and a lessening of the effectiveness of this as a tool to impact care.<sup>1</sup>

It is time for payers to consider optimal ways to impact population health using the EHR and for manufacturers to lend their full support and innovation to aid payers in achieving these goals.

## Engaging the patient

Utilizing the EHR to identify and disseminate patient-specific educational materials is a win-win for all concerned. Not only does it enrich the provider-patient interaction, it also has been shown to improve outcomes and reduce cost of care.<sup>2</sup>

However, providing these materials is more challenging for specialists and subspecialists than for primary care providers. With less prevalent disease states, there are fewer patient education materials available. This is an area where manufacturers, especially of rare disease products, can potentially partner with foundations to create patient education materials and counseling tools. These patient engagement tools can help manufacturers raise awareness of the importance of treating rare conditions and help providers and payers achieve their quality goals.

### Ways the EHR can be utilized to further population health

Suggest and disseminate appropriate patient engagement tools

Identify undertreated patients or patients with worsening chronic conditions in need of more intensive therapy

Track specific outcomes, such as readmission rates

Ensure appropriate screening and intervention following a signal event, such as a fragility fracture or transient ischemic attack

Mine real-world data on adherence, cost, resource utilization, and outcomes

## Applying analytics

The Million Hearts® EHR Optimization Guides demonstrate how to think outside the (alert) box when developing EHR-based population health initiatives. Released by the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) for Health IT on March 8, 2016, these guides help providers leverage their EHR systems to improve performance on the Million Hearts® clinical quality measures, known as ABCS.<sup>3</sup>

The initial launch of the Million Hearts® EHR Optimization Guides provides users of 3 large EHR systems (Allscripts, Cerner, and NextGen) with step-by-step instructions that help them find, use, and improve data related to aspirin therapy,

blood pressure, cholesterol, and smoking. It also provides an open invitation to other EHR vendors to work with the ONC to establish guides for their EHR products.

*Think outside the (alert) box when developing innovative population health initiatives.*

Organizations seeking to improve their quality scores and improve patient outcomes should consider exploring similar opportunities for the management of other disease states, such as diabetes or bone health.



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## Mining EHR data

Another way that manufacturers can get involved, and perhaps the most exciting opportunity for payers, is to search EHRs for real-world data on adherence, cost, resource utilization, and outcomes.

Compared with retrospective claims analyses, EHR data are much richer, and include time-stamped healthcare encounters, treatments initiated, interventions tried, and results captured.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, given the frequency with which patients change health plans, EHR data collected at the site of care should enable a more longitudinal perspective on population healthcare and delivery costs.

While it remains difficult to analyze and compare data derived from different EHR systems, the best opportunity for big data lies in mining electronic data from large health systems. Those systems that are also accountable care organizations or integrated delivery networks may be especially motivated to collaborate with manufacturers to collect and analyze EHR data. Manufacturers should explore opportunities to work in conjunction with large systems to track real-world

adherence and treatment outcomes of their products as part of pilot programs or through innovative contracting arrangements (pay-for-performance, etc). The resulting data can serve not only the specific health system and the manufacturer, but also the larger audience of payers, who seek real-world data to aid them in formulary decision making.

*Explore opportunities to work in conjunction with large systems to track real-world adherence and treatment outcomes.*

With the market shift to a value-based care model, the EHR has become increasingly sophisticated, enabling the capture of cost and outcomes data. Under this new model, manufacturers will need to work harder to demonstrate the value of their products to payers and providers. Through collaborations with payers, disease foundations, and health systems, manufacturers can leverage the EHR to both positively impact population health and demonstrate the value of their products.

## *How can you leverage the EHR platform for your brand?*

To learn more about how Entrée Health can help you utilize health information technology to further your brand's managed markets strategy, please **contact Andrew Gottfried at [agottfried@entreehealth.com](mailto:agottfried@entreehealth.com) or 212-896-8026.**



**References:** **1.** AHRQ Patient Safety Network. Alert fatigue. <https://psnet.ahrq.gov/primers/primer/28>. Accessed March 21, 2016. **2.** Hibbard JH, Greene J. What the evidence shows about patient activation: better health outcomes and care experiences; fewer data on costs. *Health Aff.* 2013;32(2):207-214. **3.** HealthIT.gov. Million Hearts®. <https://www.healthit.gov/providers-professionals/million-hearts>. Accessed March 21, 2016. **4.** Celi LA, Mark RG, Stone DJ, Montgomery RA. "Big data" in the intensive care unit. Closing the data loop. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med.* 2013;187(11):1157-1160.