Road Map
Driving Adoption: 3 Steps to Clinical Readiness
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Nine out of ten providers said adopting electronic health records (EHRs) improved communication of patient information among care team members, eight out of ten said it reduced errors and improved the quality of care, and three out of four said it enabled better decision-making, according to a recent survey on clinical adoption.

In the same survey, conducted by the Massachusetts eHealth Institute (MeHI), three out of four patients said electronic communication with physicians is easier and eight out of ten believed if all doctors used EHRs instead of paper records, care would improve.¹

Despite the mounting evidence of the effectiveness and importance of clinical adoption, there is still resistance in the healthcare community. Clinical adoption is not limited to technology, but with healthcare moving from a volume-based model to one focused on quality, the ability to survive without technology becomes nearly impossible. Clinical integration demands the use of technology to support healthcare quality initiatives.

Here are three steps to clinical readiness that can accelerate the change management process and lead to higher levels of clinical adoption in your organization.
Leadership is not only an important component to effective change, it’s the driving force that leads to success. The role varies based on the organization and the change initiative, but the one constant is leadership’s ownership of outcomes. When leadership drives adoption and buy-in from start to finish, projects have a greater chance of success.

Creating a sustainable change culture is dependent upon leadership’s ability to meet the cultural needs of the organization and develop an organizational trust. Adoption of new initiatives without the ability of leadership to reasonably satisfy cultural demands is a difficult sell. Take steps to move the culture of your healthcare organization to one that is motivated by change initiatives that lead to increased adoption and sustained outcomes.

Leadership must fully accept the change and develop an effective change management strategy and plan. They must set the vision for healthcare quality improvement and guide the way in the transformation process. Leaders must determine how the organization’s culture will impact the adoption change. They must set appropriate goals and provide the necessary resources to meet them.

It is imperative that the organization has the tools, techniques and strategies identified for consistent change management and readiness processes. A strong program for this purpose should include a toolkit with elements for tracking and measuring, work plans, instructions, guides, reference materials, and templates. Establishing defined methods creates consistency and is a start to changing the behaviors and thinking that comes with change.
Encourage Providers

Providers tend to offer the strongest opposition to change. Provider adoption can be a painful and expensive challenge for healthcare organizations and the resulting impact can spread throughout the patient’s continuum of care. You need to identify and analyze the underlying issues causing low provider adoption rates and work with them to resolve those issues through risk mitigation plans.

The implementation of EHR functionality has been a nationwide challenge, but the rate of adoption has improved over time. A recent report released by the National Center for Health Statistics shows the adoption rate for office-based providers (with variations in size and types of practices) using any type of EHR for clinical use rose from 34.8% in 2007 to 71.8% in 2012. Unfortunately, this rate shows the increase in EHR implementations, but not necessarily the rate of adoption and effective usage.

The American Medical Association (AMA) has identified usability as the top EHR negative for physicians. The AMA sponsored a study done by RAND corporation on the physician’s personal satisfaction with EHR systems and concluded that “while most physicians like the concept of EHRs and how they enhanced remote access and electronic communication, their inadequate design and usability provided a unique and vexing challenge to physicians’ professional satisfaction in areas such as increased time on data entry, interference with face-to-face care, interfaces that don’t match workflow, poor health information exchange and a mismatch between Meaningful Use and clinical practice.” The report also suggests that Federal EHR certification requirements should include a level of usability.

To increase adoptions, you need to build relationships with physicians and work with them on strategies and methods that can mitigate usability issues to improve the provider experience.
Support End Users

The end-users are ultimately the key to sustaining an adoption initiative because implementing a new EHR, optimizing or upgrading the system, or bringing on new processes affect them on a daily basis. When this group isn’t engaged or resists the adoption, there can be an enormous struggle during the project implementation. There is also significant risk to sustaining the change once implemented if end users are not on board.

The first step is to understand your people, their satisfaction level, their needs, and their views of the work environment. Next, build trust through effective communication that provides relevant information to catch their attention and encourage active engagement.

Understand how people in the organization influence others. Build a diverse group of change leaders made up of strong influencers and logical thinkers. Develop champions that can drive change. When building your network of change leaders, take care to train and develop them over time. These leaders are not an authority, but they can greatly influence the attitude and behavior of the rest of the staff. Before they can do that, they have to have the same change vision as leadership and know how to embrace it to effectively support the organizations objectives.

You must support the engagement and development of end users. Previous failed initiatives and past incidents of even silo mistrust can result in poor engagement and uncooperativeness so you must provide consistency and trust.

There will never be a perfect environment for change, but having an effective change management process in place can provide the impetus for sustained growth and improvement. The implementation of EHRs is just the beginning of healthcare transformation and forms the technical foundation for what’s ahead. In order to achieve the goals of integration in healthcare, organizations would benefit greatly from starting now with creating a culture of change and showing providers and end users the resulting benefits.
Sources

1. Mass. HIT survey shows high rates of EHR adoption; enthusiastic public, by Beth Walsh, Clinical Innovation and Technology, October 23, 2014
Once you’ve established a baseline, the next step is to make improvements by initiating a corrective action program that addresses your people, process, and technology.

**People**

Focus on training and education so everyone in the organization understands the depth and impact of the problem and what their role in solving it should be. Specific actions to take include:

- Establish accountability and self-reporting by root cause owner and process owner
- Set a zero to low tolerance for finger pointing and excuses
- Recognize improvement and determine consequences for unacceptable outcomes

**Workflow**

A thorough process review will help highlight redundancies and time-wasting tasks and will quantify the outcome or performance expectation for each task. The most effective way to improve the workflow process is to eliminate errors that could result in a denial.

Key points to include:

- Develop robust pre-visit/visit management process

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