Use of Health Information Technology Among Dentists

Key Findings of a National Survey

2019
About the Assessment

The American Dental Association Health Policy Institute (HPI) partnered with the Maryland Health Care Commission to develop and distribute a questionnaire focused on adoption and use of electronic health records (EHRs) and telehealth (or teledentistry) among dentists. This dashboard presents select data gathered from 645 respondents.
Participation

Dentists from 41 states and Washington DC responded to the questionnaire

A majority of respondents practice in small independent dental practices

- Single dentist: 64%
- 2-3 dentists: 28%
- 4-5 dentists: 5%
- More than 5 dentists: 3%

Notes:
- Independent practices include individual and group practices with no Dental Service Organization (DSO)
- Institutional practices include individual and group practices with a DSO, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Indian Health Services, Veterans Affairs, dental school clinics, and hospitals
Introduction

More than half of dentists have adopted an EHR

56% EHR

44% Paper

“Information technology use leads to greater efficiency and productivity. This is very beneficial to patients and doctors.”
– Survey Participant

“Digital imaging has made teledentistry perfect for the general practitioner working with specialists.”
– Survey Participant
EHR adoption is more common among...

Dentists practicing in institutional settings
- 53% Independent Setting
- 85% Institutional Setting

Large dental practices (at least four dentists)
- 52% Single Dentist
- 62% 2-3 Dentists
- 80% 4-5 Dentists
- 86% More than 5 Dentists

Dentists who accept Medicaid
- 56% Private Insurance Only
- 61% Medicaid Only
- 66% Private Insurance & Medicaid
One in five EHR adopters has switched EHRs in the past five years

- 20% Switched EHRs
- 38% For improved functionality
- 25% To go paperless
- 24% Other
- 13% To implement in a new practice/location

Two EHR vendors share a majority of the dental market

- Dentrix: 36%
- Eaglesoft: 24%
- Carestream*: 10%

* Carestream solutions include Softdent, PracticWorks, and WinOMS.
Core EHR functions are used for clinical documentation and to view patient health information

- Access patient notes, medication lists, and/or problem lists: 91%
- Record patient encounter information: 89%
- Access diagnostic image results: 87%
- Generate reminders to staff about services needed for patients: 67%
- Referral management: 57%
- Receive alerts on potential drug interactions, allergies, etc.: 56%
- Send electronic prescriptions to pharmacies: 24%

Patient summaries produced by EHRs are rarely provided electronically

- Yes, printed summary: 33%
- Yes, via email: 6%
- No: 61%
Challenges related to redesigning practice workflows, cost, and change management are barriers to adoption

- 46% Redesigning the practice’s operational and clinical processes is burdensome
- 34% Using an EHR requires too much staff education and training
- 25% EHR products’ abilities do not meet practice needs
- 38% Purchasing an EHR is too expensive
- 30% Updating / maintaining an EHR is too expensive
- 23% Privacy / security concerns

“My IT guy has become one of my best friends!”
– Survey Participant

“It would be nice to get some support on the fastest and least expensive way to go from paper charts to EMR.”
– Survey Participant

“In a rural setting, hiring qualified IT staff is difficult.”
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About half of dentists show some level of interest in offering teledentistry services.

Among dentists who have used teledentistry in the last year, three in four have used it regularly.

Dentists using teledentistry use it for three main purposes:

- Remote patient monitoring: 39%
- Communication with patients: 53%
- Consultation with other dentists or health care providers: 67%

Frequency of use:

- Once or twice: 25%
- Weekly: 22%
- Monthly: 24%
- Quarterly: 18%
- Daily: 11%
The End

The Dental Health IT survey was developed by the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) in partnership with HPI. The data analysis was completed by MHCC and included 645 responses to the survey. The MHCC appreciates the opportunity to support HPI in completion of this work. For more information, contact Alana Sutherland at alana.sutherland@maryland.gov.