



Small Practice eDesign

SMALL MEDICAL PRACTICES ARE THE next frontier for electronic health record (EHR) adoption. While federal stimulus incentives and new market offerings will help ease the financial burden for medical practices to obtain EHRs, most small practices do not have the expertise and technical skills to use these tools to improve clinical care and efficiency.

The California HealthCare Foundation (CHCF), an independent philanthropy committed to improving the way health care is delivered and financed in California, is launching Small Practice eDesign to provide these needed technical skills.

The project will

develop a prototype
community

infrastructure and

tools that support the adoption, integration, and meaningful use of EHRs for small practices.



Working through a local trusted intermediary organization, the Foundation for Medical Care (FFMC) of Tulare and Kings Counties, the project will develop, refine, and test a model to support EHR implementation in up to 20 primary care practices in Tulare County. It will combine Web-hosted software, centralized implementation, and technical support. The Massachusetts eHealth Collaborative will provide much of the health information technology implementation support. In addition, replicable tools will be developed to support standardized data flows, redesigned office workflow, and other functions.

In addition to demonstrating successful adoption of EHRs by small practices in Tulare County, the

initiative will work with other communities to replicate these approaches and develop sustainable delivery network and business models. The project involves the following entities:

- **Small medical practices.** With support and guidance, practices contract with the vendors, purchase any needed hardware, and participate in a learning community to support EHR implementation and follow the project timeline. Up to 20 practices in Tulare County will implement EHRs in two phases, beginning with a cohort of 7 sites (Wave 1), followed by a second group of 12 to 15 practices (Wave 2).
- **Trusted entity in the community (the “intermediary”).** Serves as the first-line, primary support to the practices—maintains the master services agreement with vendors, provides local project management support, coordinates the technical components and data flows, leads the training and serves as coach for practices to learn quality improvement skills with IT implementation, and conducts outreach to new practices. The FFMC will act as intermediary with technical implementation support by the Massachusetts eHealth Collaborative.
- **Vendors.** Provide the hosted business management and EHR products and enhance the software to produce a community dashboard. A request of information process led to the selection of two IT vendors; one supporting revenue cycle management (athenahealth’s Athena Collector at www.athenahealth.com/our-services/athenaCollector.php) and the second providing the electronic medical record

PROJECT OVERVIEW

functions (e-ClinicalWorks at www.eclinicalworks.com/eclinicalworks8/features.html). The two vendors have a proven track record of interoperability and will be used in combination as part of the Small Practice eDesign project.

The project is expected to improve operational efficiency and clinical quality, for example improved access to care and decreased cycle times. These changes should improve both provider and patient satisfaction.

Practices and clinics selected to participate in the project will receive partial subsidies from CHCF to purchase and implement the new system, including technical assistance to redesign workflow and training in data-driven quality improvement processes through FFMC. They will also engage in quality improvement activities and report quality data to FFMC that will be aggregated (no patient-level data would be made available) and reported into an electronic community “dashboard.”

The Small Practice eDesign project will help spread quality improvement through health IT throughout California. A process of identifying additional communities and intermediaries (IPAs, hospitals, etc.) in California that could leverage the tools developed by this program is already underway. Several organizations already have expressed interest in supporting a replication.

ABOUT THE TULARE COUNTY PROJECT

For more information, contact Brandi Guinn at brandi@tkfmc.org.

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

The California HealthCare Foundation is an independent philanthropy committed to improving the way health care is delivered and financed in California. By promoting innovations in care and broader access to information, our goal is to ensure that all Californians can get the care they need, when they need it, at a price they can afford. For more information, visit www.chcf.org.