EHR

Purpose of an EHR

An electronic health record (EHR):

- Provides easy access to comprehensive patient information including health issues, concerns, and treatment
- Streamlines provider workflows, enhancing communication among care providers
- Reduces gaps in care by preventing delays
- Provides data that can be used for billing, reporting, disease surveillance, and quality management
- Gives healthcare professionals access to evidence-based tools to support decision making, for example, when there may be a drug interaction.

Physician Incentives and Reductions

The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has developed a system of positive and negative reinforcement for the adoption of EHR. This reinforcement system is in the form of financial incentives and reductions. Medicare has incentivized physicians and provider groups with the opportunity for additional financial compensation for being a Meaningful EHR User.
By 2015, if a physician or provider group is able to adopt an EHR system by meeting eligibility criteria and elects not to do so, they will be penalized by a reduction in reimbursement payments. The reduction will be a minimum of one percent and a maximum of five percent. Qualified physicians and provider groups may request a significant hardship exemption, which will allow a five-year extension.

Meaningful EHR users include:

- Physicians who can demonstrate that they are using the approved EHR technology for managing and maintaining patient health records
- Hospitals that can demonstrate that they are using the approved EHR technology for quality improvement and the evaluation of quality measures