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The 7 Types of Healthcare Information Technology & Healthcare Software

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The average person often doesn't think about healthcare software. They often don't think about how it affects the medical industry as a whole either. But its impact has revolutionized patient care on a global scale. The implementation of these systems in hospitals and practices have monumental effects. Every year more healthcare providers are taking steps to change the way their business manages their internal processes.

But choosing the right one for your business can be confusing. There are several categories of healthcare information technology (HIT) and with many of these software sharing similar capabilities, it's not easy to distinguish one from the next. That's why we've made a primer to help you break down the basics.

What is Health Information Technology?

Before we dive in too far, let's define what health information technology actually is. In the broadest sense, HIT is the application of information technology to healthcare. It's another way to describe the comprehensive management of information among consumers, clinicians, government, quality entities and insurers.

The use of health information technology [improves the quality and effectiveness](#) of healthcare. It promotes individual and public health and increases the accuracy of diagnoses. The software also reduces costs and medical errors, while improving the efficiency of both administrative and clinical processes.

How Many Categories Are There?

There are three main categories of healthcare information technology and four "subcategories." You'll find these exist in both hospitals and physician offices and are beneficial for all types of providers.

Practice Management

As the name implies, [practice management software](#) (PM) helps you manage different administrative and clinical aspects of your practice. This software centralizes various systems so you can run things more efficiently. It automates almost every task that fits under the "health information management" umbrella.

PM software takes away stress and helps you optimize your time. Your overall goal is to help you provide better short- and long-term patient care, and with the correct system in place, you'll exceed patient expectations.

EMR

Electronic medical record (EMR) systems are one of the most popular medical software categories. EMRs replaced paper records by digitizing medical charting, making digital versions of charts and patient histories. These systems can also alert you when patients are due for preventive procedures and screenings. In addition, EMRs help physicians treat patients by looking at their history and comparing their health data against past entries.

EHR

Electronic health record (EHR) systems function similarly to EMRs, though the former is a more robust system overall. EHRs allow you to check a patient's history, diagnoses, treatments, medications, allergies, X-rays, test results and more.

One major [difference](#) to note is how information is shared by each. Data from EMRs can only be viewed within one office while EHRs can share patient data with other EHRs. If a patient moves or goes to an emergency room, they can be properly treated because different physicians will have access to their information.

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Four Subcategories of Healthcare Information Technology

These systems often [integrate with practice management](#) software to provide robust functions and better patient care.

Patient Portal

[Patient portals](#) help people view everything you'd find in an EMR and EHR, including patient history, treatments and medications. They can check on records or additional notes you leave for them, even when they aren't in your office. These systems have increased in popularity among hospitals and medical practices in recent years. Today's consumer expects more transparency and accessibility than ever before, so it's no wonder why portals are becoming an industry standard.

Scheduling

Scheduling software [oftentimes goes hand-in-hand](#) with a patient portal. You can direct patients to log into their account and schedule appointments when it's convenient for them. Providing patients the accessibility to manage their own scheduling radically reduces your phone traffic.

Rather than calling every time they want to make an appointment, patients can go online via their preferred mobile device. In today's digital age, most patients choose this option to handle scheduling on their own anyway. It may be one of the biggest advantages to simplifying a small but vital process.

Medical Billing

One of the most time-consuming tasks for practices is [managing all aspects of billing](#). It's especially true for busy hospitals and practices when there is little time to spare for most tasks in the first place.

That's where [medical billing software](#) steps in. This type of system automates patient billing and filing insurance claims. If there's an issue such as a late payment, the system alerts you so you can act accordingly.

ePrescribing

Sending prescriptions to pharmacies can be tedious when creating orders for multiple patients. To expedite the process, physician offices began using ePrescribing software. In just a few clicks a prescription is sent, filled and waiting for the patient when they get to the pharmacy. Additionally, ePrescribing systems ensure there's never a prescription mix up due to hard to decipher handwriting.

The system displays the prescription at the pharmacy, ensuring patient safety by giving them the correct one. [A study by Decision Resources](#) found that using ePrescribing software has increased the prescribing of generic drugs. You're able to keep better track of patient records and provide more cost-effective medication.

Implementing Health Information Technology

Although HIT offers many potential benefits, individuals and institutions have been slow to adopt the technology. In some cases, the issues are financially motivated. Even when [monetary incentives](#) are provided by the federal government, implementing HIT can be too expensive of a turn off for providers.

Other times the problems are technical. One example of this occurs when companies try to interface different proprietary systems with health information technology containing laboratory or medication data.

To choose and use HIT effectively, an organization must be diligent in researching both current and proposed requirements. Despite initial difficulties associated with implementing the program, the outcomes are worth the risk and effort.

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Ready to Start Using Healthcare Information Technology?

Though there are many systems to choose from, we hope this list can help narrow your search. Request demos from vendors so you know what each program is capable of before making a final decision.

Think of how processes will be streamlined at your hospital or practice once you do implement a system. It could make the least favorable tasks much easier to manage for you and the rest of your staff.



4 comments

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- henry w patterson** - April 10, 2018

the information was very useful.

[reply](#)
- Brianna Picker** - December 4, 2018

I have actually witness how resourceful these systems are

[reply](#)
- Bergen Adair** - December 5, 2018

Thanks for reading, Brianna! I'm glad to hear healthcare tech has had a positive impact on your life. It's definitely an area that's going to continue to expand and advance rapidly, and I'm looking forward to seeing how it will continue to improve our lives.

[reply](#)
- Bergen Adair** - December 11, 2018

Thanks for reading, Abrian! We hope you found the information useful.

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