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Why cloud based EHR is Physician's favorite?

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Abstract

Are you wondering why there is so much noise around in support for cloud computing? And, what it has to do with EHR? Cloud computing is beyond just a technology. And, many health providers are choosing cloud-based systems as a solution. It comes with a great number of benefits and peace of mind. However, there are remarkable concerns too, like data security and sharing. Secure access to online personal data is a big task. In spite of all, there is doubt that the cloud based systems are the future of healthcare IT.

Background

In the middle of the 19th century, the public hospitals began to emerge and medical knowledge started growing exponentially. Despite these developments, there still weren't any standards dictating what information to record. Therefore, it was a challenge for doctors to compare cases or traces and to arrive at a diagnosis. This is when healthcare professionals realized that documenting patient care can benefit both, providers and patients. In the 70s and the 80s the advancement in technology encouraged the healthcare system to explore medical records with help of computers. In spite of some limitations, documentation became popular and was used throughout the nation after healthcare providers realized that they were better able to treat patients with complete and accurate medical history.

Moving Trend

The continual change in both supply and demand within the healthcare market influences the use of IT and serves as the principal driver for the adaptation of cloud computing. The desire for health care will continue to ascend, mostly because of an aging population and also from an increasing engrossment in wellness by the consumers. The new web-based EHR systems or cloud based EHR gives the flexibility of paying monthly for the services rather than buying servers at exorbitant rates along with other associated hardware and software. So the difference in running EMR systems vs. Cloud is that many of your devices have more direct connection to your network than the truly web-based system, which always must store and recall data across the internet.

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Let us look at the trends that are driving the healthcare market dynamics:

Escalation of consumerism – it has helped re-focus the healthcare provider market from volume-based to value-based. The participants are graded based on the value obtained as opposed to the volume of services.

The Impact of healthcare regulation and restructuring of financial risks – it impacts the structure of the market and leads to consolidation, both vertical and horizontal. It drives the need for native cloud applications that are architected and developed to meet the rapidly changing consumer requirements while complying or enabling compliance with applicable regulations.

Influence of digitalization – the healthcare industry is shifting toward an information –centric care delivery that is enabled in part by open standards that support cooperation, collaborative workflows, and information sharing.

Focus on preventive healthcare – healthcare delivery is becoming more decentralized and thereby providing a wider choice of institutions where the patient can receive care. Consequently, mobile applications, IoT, and wearable technologies are becoming more common.

Need for medical practice and healthcare delivery transformation - All healthcare providers conduct the business of healthcare according to standards and practices that may vary significantly. The most successful mitigation is the provision of location, time-independent, collaborative, consistent and real-time cognitive support which only cloud-based information technology can provide.

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As we already know cloud computing refers to an on-demand, self-service internet infrastructure that enables the user to access computing resources anytime from anywhere. The above trends are gradually changing as there is replacing of traditional mechanisms with digital options. There is increasing investment in technologies that accelerate the digitization of the healthcare industry. Also there is accelerating of medical knowledge and practice improvement and employing new business models for lower cost, better efficiency and higher effectiveness.

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As if now medical practices don't have enough to worry on EMR implementation. And, that is mainly because of cloud based systems or components. For Client Server based systems, still resource procurement is a big challenge for a practice not just because of heavy investment, but the process and design itself is long enough starting from designing server room and network, purchasing a computer server, buying a license for the EMR software, installing software on your server, and so on.

The economic benefits of cloud computing can be significant since cloud computing provides cost flexibility and the potential for reduced costs. The cost of staff resources required to deploy and maintain IT resources and related costs may be reduced when using cloud services. It is easy to implement an EHR software as it does not require IT experts to install, configure, test, run, secure and update any type of hardware or software. Therefore, the implementation cost becomes minimal. Many hospitals and physicians are utilizing the same system - cloud based practice management, medical records and medical image archiving solutions, which reduces redundant costs. A cloud based server makes it effortless to append new doctors, users or locations without having to go through the hassle of contacting an in-house IT team to

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perform the tasks for you. This way they are focusing on supporting other operational and clinical support systems.

Another benefit is that the real-time patient data is accessible from multiple locations. Supposing if the medical practice has multiple locations, the patient data stored on cloud based systems can be accessed from tablets, PCs or MAC. It is not dependent on specific location or server. Even the patients who visit many specialists as part of their healthcare, the accessibility of their information from various locations is done with ease. The cloud based EHRs provide medical practitioners with an options to work from home or any other location (even when on vacation) other than their office.

It also permits the system to access outside of the office and allows physicians, staff and patients to collaborate more effectively and achieve better care and coordination. You are always in control of your data, you can download any chart with just a couple of clicks and store it in an electronic format. Cloud-based systems can be customized to meet specific needs of your practice or hospital. It collaborates with you to meet your practice's unique objectives, also doctors and their staff are finding cloud-based EHRs not only easy to set up but it has eliminated the expense of establishing an IT support department.

The web-based EHR system simplifies scalability as it has the flexibility of web-based software that allows large medical practices to expand on the cloud and have broader picture. When talking about flexibility, cloud services can enable remote access to applications and data through the internet using wireless systems to enable its access at anytime from anywhere as long as the internet connectivity is established. It is large support for ecosystem of healthcare provider, payer, life sciences and IT solution partners; all of which increase the potential for wide range of services to healthcare organizations. The cloud services allow physicians to search vast amounts of data to produce more reasoned treatment plans. In this manner it proves to deliver a better return on investment (ROI) than its client-server counterpart. Patients can utilize these services to explore their medical issues and collaborate with their treatment provider. Therefore, the greatest functional benefit of healthcare cloud services is the wide

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range of new capabilities available to health organization staff, in order to implement better ways of working and to offer new services to their patients.

Still some physicians are having security as a concern. Cloud-based data is safer than client server as the data is backed up securely in various locations. There is no worry of losing data to a natural disaster, fire etc. Web-based EHR system meets HIPAA compliance through data centers with high-level encryption methods which makes data unreadable even if a security breach occurs. Medical systems built using cloud services can provide web access to data, avoiding the need to store information on client devices. The cloud service providers typically operate on such a scale that they have all the necessary IT skills so as to provide maximum cloud based security solutions.

No one desires the worst, but if any disaster strikes, your cloud service providers streamline the recovery. They will preconfigure the solution and it lets you operate freely through any disruption. For instance, some practices utilize cloud storage as their foremost backups remain on site, but they are replicated to cloud storage where they will be protected from fire, flood etc. Disaster is not always avoidable but it is always fixable. You will need to find a cloud service provider that offers the specific capabilities that your practice needs.

 Nowadays the providers are leaning towards the use of mobile devices such as iPad and Tab based EHR. The satisfaction levels are higher among mobile EHR users. It is highly cost effective for smaller practices as the deep learning and analysis of larger data set across the industry are available now due to cloud based EHR. It helps to track diseases, map them geospatially and inform the population where risk exists. These services are utilized today for a fraction of the cost due to cloud computing. There are many tools that exist in the marketplace today one of them being, Centers for Disease Prevention (CDC). All of the above proves that when it comes to Cloud-based EHR, it is easy to set-up and manage along with reliable customer support.

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Then Why Not just Cloud Based EHR?

Where there are pros there are also some difficulties of Cloud based EHR such as:

- For larger practices (with multiple offices) and hospitals, it is a better return on their investment if they buy the EMR system rather than paying a monthly access fee.
- There could be limited customizability
- There is complete dependency on the internet
- Host controls all your data
- May be problematic for rural practices with limited internet options
- It may be impractical for uploading larger imaging files
- The practice may lose data if the vendor goes out of business
- Bandwidth is limited by practice's internet connection
- Depending on vendors for backups and security
- In long run, becomes more expensive
- Patient data may be jeopardized if co-mingled with other clients

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At The End,

Consequently, with cloud based EHR, there is less up front cost for licensing, no purchase of any kind, easily assessable from anywhere at any time, and it is the responsibility of the vendor to meet Meaningful Use. It is most feasible for smaller practices. As we are seeing, in healthcare system there are some technological changes taking place at least twice in a decade. Hence, a practice faces many difficulties in procuring huge cost and budget. Keeping all in mind, you are the best judge for your practice and can weigh out the pros and cons of the cloud based EHR. Though there are more advantages, as it makes everything possible by using just your finger-tips!

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