More medical practices are selecting and implementing electronic health records (EHR) today than ever before. Some statistics suggest the number of practices purchasing an EHR is double what it was three years ago. With Meaningful Use, many practices may be focused more on the features of the software than how they are going to implement it into their workflow. The sad result is that while the software works, it might not be used or used to its fullest because the implementation was lacking.

A lot of what goes into effectively using your EHR, happens before you make your purchase. So be sure you don’t make these mistakes when selecting and implementing your EHR!

1. **No buy-in**
   You need the buy-in of the physicians and staff in your practice to be successful at choosing and implementing new EHR software. One of the most common mistakes that practices make is letting one person choose the software without buy-in from everyone else. The result is often resistance to the final choice and providers or staff who fight making the change.

2. **Undefined Expectations**
   You have to set clear expectations around what you want in an EHR, what your practice needs, and what your resources are. You need to know this before you pick a vendor. And by “you” we mean, your whole practice. Whether you are two people or twenty, you need input from everyone so that it will work for the whole business and not just the physicians or practice manager.

3. **Not Assessing Workflow**
   Speaking of changing the way you work ... It’s important to evaluate your current workflow before you make a change. The fact is that the workflow will change and those changes will vary depending on how you do things now. To make the most of the EHR, you have to be open to change. By mapping out your current workflow, you can work with your vendor to identify areas that will need adjustment. Then, you can prepare for those changes and make sure people are ready and well trained.

4. **Lack of Objectives**
   Objectives are not the same as expectations. Objectives are specific goals. Setting goals allows you to make sure that the solution you choose and processes you put in place are designed to help you reach certain objectives. You need to ask some basic questions. Do you want to make more money? Provide better patient care? Work less? Expand your services? For each practice these essential goals are unique.
Inadequate Infrastructure
Be sure you have the right infrastructure in place for your EHR. A lack of necessary bandwidth can slow down every process in your practice when you launch. Make sure you have the connectivity and speed to complete all your tasks and choose the right hardware for your needs.

Missing Milestones
Once you are ready to start your implementation, don’t forget to set some clear milestones for success. Set realistic dates for achieving specific items like training, scanning, sending electronic prescriptions, etc. Then, don’t get derailed by implementation challenges. Stick to your schedule!

Inadequate Training
If people are not trained adequately it will slow down your transition to EHR. So don’t skimp on the training! Get as much training as you need for everyone on your staff, and select staff to train as super users to support the rest of the staff after your training is over.

Unprepared Patients
No matter how well trained and prepared your staff are, the change to EHR will slow things down initially. Tell your patients what is going on and ask for their patience and understanding.

Bad Bedside Manner
Many healthcare providers don’t think about how the EHR will impact their interaction with patients. The fact is that using a computer to document while you are with a patient does affect that experience. Awareness is the first step to addressing this. Think about what type of device will work best and how you can use it to engage the patient instead of letting it come between the provider and the patient.

Thinking You’re Done
When it comes to managing your practice and improving your business, you are never done. Whether it’s EHR or billing, there is always something new. And you should expect your vendors to have a robust plan for ongoing product development. These new tools and features will help you continue to improve the quality of your patient care and the management of your business.