Psychiatrists, Rate Your EHR!

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In April, APA members received an email invitation to complete an online survey on electronic health records (EHRs). The answers to these questions will provide a kind of Consumer Reports review from physicians who use EHR products, making it possible for physicians who do not yet use EHRs to turn to unbiased information from their peers—not just information provided by vendors—when making purchase decisions.

The survey was developed by AmericanEHR Partners, an alliance between Cientis Technologies, a company that specializes in EHRs, and the American College of Physicians, AMA, American Academy of Family Physicians, and a dozen other provider organizations.

The survey consists of general questions and questions specific to the practice of psychiatry. The psychiatric questions, which were developed by APA’s Committee on Electronic Health Records, cover topics related to an EHR’s ability to support DSM diagnoses and new coding requirements, ability to customize templates, ability to manage (separate) psychotherapy notes, and the ability to collaboratively create records with an integrated treatment team. While responses to the general questions will certainly provide useful information, responses to the specialty-specific questions will provide information on functionality deemed critical to practicing psychiatrists.

AmericanEHR Partners will combine APA survey responses with those from the other participating medical societies, covering a significant cross-section of medical professionals. To protect the integrity of this significant undertaking, participants will be cross-checked against society-member scrolls, but the identity of individual respondents will remain confidential.

When you access the survey through the link provided to APA members in an e-mail, the psychiatry-specific questions will automatically be triggered. If you access the survey via an alternate association link (for example, the AMA), the data you provide will similarly trigger questions specific to AMA members. The survey can also be accessed at http://www.psychiatry.org/ehrsurvey.

When the survey period is over in mid-May, APA will collect the psychiatry-specific results, publish them, and use them to focus on our specialty’s unique EHR needs. To do this effectively, we need your input!
As a small incentive, APA members completing the survey will be entered into a drawing for a free Apple iPad mini.

Why should you take the time to participate? If you do not currently use an EHR system but may do so in the future, this survey gives you the perfect opportunity to voice your needs. If you are using an EHR system, then your experiences will provide the exact EHR-specific and specialty-specific data we are seeking. Not only will you be able to sound off on the good (and not so good) qualities of your EHR system, but also your impressions will be combined with others’ to inform discussions about EHR functionalities essential to psychiatric practice.

APA members will have access to the survey data in a number of ways. To access real-time respondent information, members can use their free AmericanEHR Partners account created during the survey at http://www.americanehr.com, to view results that are filtered and sorted. Members seeking “top 10” results, sorted by practice size, can view results in categories to include “Satisfaction,” “Usability,” “Prescribing,” “Workflow Management,” “Ordering,” “Population Management,” “Implementation,” “Training,” “Support,” “Interfaces,” “Billing,” and “Purchase Experience.” Finally, once the active survey period is over, APA’s Committee on Electronic Health Records will make the psychiatry-specific results available to members as well.

AmericanEHR Partners has created an online clinician community that focuses on the use of health information technology in the delivery of medical care. AmericanEHR Partners organizes information and facilitates optimal decision making through education, social media, and peer-contributed data. It also provides physicians, agencies, and vendors with tools to identify, implement, and effectively use EHRs and other health care technologies.

Once the survey results are in, psychiatrists and organizational leaders will have additional information to inform EHR purchase decisions. Similarly, those already using EHRs will have another platform in which to communicate concerns specific to psychiatry. If APA participation is robust, then we can potentially add thousands of voices to influence the development of EHRs and other technologies that are increasingly at the center of how we communicate, access, interpret, and comply.