


# M.D. NEWS

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR PHYSICIANS



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# Preparing for an Industry Overhaul

## Helping Physicians Get Ready for Health Reform

By Georgia Casciato

"Physicians are both intrigued by technology's ability to streamline medical communications yet scared of the financial requirements associated with future reform compliance," says David Reynolds, President of SynthesisMD.

Mr. Reynolds understands these challenges firsthand. He's spent the last 25 years working with progressive providers helping them optimize health care IT and clinical workflow. It is a difficult quest to marry clinical workflow to affordable IT and patient communication processes, but it can be done. From his vantage point, Mr. Reynolds offers these suggestions to help physicians use technology to prepare for health reform.

### KNOW YOUR STARTING POINT

"Review your strategic plan to ensure growth projections account for workflow and technology support. *An IT audit is clearly the best starting point to determine path for technology optimization on the road to EMRs.* Technology needs to support key practice outcomes and deliverables. Merely purchasing technology without formal integration into the big picture is a tactic in absence of a strategy."

### CLINICAL WORKFLOW IS THE DRIVER

"Organizations who most effectively use technology start with clinical workflow. Too often, technological processes trump clinical workflow, resulting in costly mistakes and physician problems. Clinical workflow should never have to compensate for technology that just doesn't fit."

### EMRS ARE AN ENDPOINT, NOT A STARTING POSITION

"There are several milestones a practice must attain *before* they are ready for EMRs, including determining pain points in the current workflow, examining where and how

David Reynolds, SynthesisMD President, is an accomplished architect of innovative health care IT and workflow optimization. His background includes 25 years as an IT executive with large-scale accomplishments including the design and implementation of campus-wide IT installations. Mr. Reynolds has received many distinguished service awards, including IKON's highest honor, the President's Award.

SynthesisMD is a consulting practice dedicated to helping physicians succeed through integrated clinical workflow and technology optimization.

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the practice and the providers view technology and defining metrics for success.

"Computerizing existing patient files is an absolute must, as they represent the anchor files needed to build the EMRs. Less than 5% of Chicago providers have EMRs. Most still have back rooms filled with multiple years of paper records. Develop a timetable, process and partner to help prepare your practice for EMRs."

### START YOUR TECHNOLOGY TRANSITION WITH IVR

"Phone-based IVR [interactive voice recognition] allows providers to automate key communications, such as post discharge follow-up or daily diabetes checkups. Simple phone scripts can be generated on an outbound basis for appointments, to make sure patients understand care instructions or to prompt prescription refills.

"These simple yet sophisticated systems allow decision trees to track normal responses, but also with triage capabilities to an operator, nurse or physician via fax, e-mail, page or text message. IVR can also be used to populate or update EMRs.

"Providers invest in high-end technology to support clinical care and standard business practices. Yet, they fall short of

recognizing cost savings associated with using everyday technologies for routine patient care checkpoints, appointment follow-up and proactive satisfaction monitoring.

"IVR is the best lead for creating proactive patient-friendly communication. The only equipment required from the patient is a phone. Other tools that can be added include e-mail, paging, fax and text messaging. Because all technologies are integrated patient tracking is already in place."

### CELEBRATE ROI AND STRATEGICALLY REINVEST

"IVR can be low-hanging fruit with minimal cost and tech integration required. Put metrics in place to show quick ROI wins. This will help justify other technology investments to drive more improvements.

"In a side-by-side IVR comparison with a mailed out satisfaction survey, implementation steps were reduced from 15 to four, IVR response rate more than doubled, costs were reduced by 400% and information was collected and evaluated on an instantaneous basis.

"Lastly, engage and educate staff about technologies and processes that will allow them to do their jobs better. Securing their input about next targets for improvement will only ensure technology acceptance and practice success." ■

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