

Benefits

The benefits of electronic health records (EHRs) are numerous. If you ever wondered how the pharmacist deciphered a prescription your doctor wrote, you're not alone! One of the many advantages to storing your medical data electronically is that your files will be easier to read. No longer will anyone have to decipher handwritten notes — errors can be avoided.

Other benefits are:

- EHRs allow faster, more complete retrieval of patient health information. A doctor will immediately see your current treatments, medications, allergies or prior diagnosis.
- EHRs can be backed up. Should a natural disaster such as Hurricane Katrina occur, electronic health records would be stored and saved, unlike paper files which would end up lost or damaged.
- EHRs offer greater security and privacy than paper records.

This publication is made possible through the Health Information Security and Privacy Collaboration (HISPC) project funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT.

NCHICA

North Carolina Healthcare Information
and Communications Alliance, Inc.
www.nchica.org

Get to Know the Facts about Electronic Health Records



*Protecting Your Health
and Your Health Information*

NCHICA

*Improving health and care in North Carolina
by accelerating the adoption of information
technology and enabling policies*

Efficient and Lifesaving



Doctors are beginning to use electronic health records (EHRs) instead of paper. Just like with banks, technology is changing the way we do things. For health care, this change will be beneficial to patients and doctors.

As these new systems are installed, there will be a reduction in duplicate medical tests. With an EHR system tied into a network, your doctor can send your test results to your other doctors electronically.

Doctors with EHRs can join networks for health information exchange (HIE). If your doctor does that and you have a medical emergency while traveling, it will be much easier for an emergency room doctor to obtain needed health records through an HIE. This could be a life-saving difference.

Accessible

As a health care consumer, you have the right to access your personal health information. Health care providers must comply with your right to:

- Request a copy of your health records
- Request corrections be made to your records

There are circumstances when your permission is not required for a health care provider to access or share your information, such as:

- To provide treatment
- To pay providers for your care
- To protect the public's health, such as reporting flu outbreaks in your area



- To make required reports to authorities, such as reporting gunshot wounds

Privacy and Security



Similar to paper records, doctors' offices that use EHRs must comply with the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), as well as other state and federal laws on privacy. Patient privacy and security are built into all EHR systems. Unlike paper records, EHRs can be built so that only authorized individuals can view them, and there is a record of who reviewed each file.

System developers and governmental agencies are working hard to protect patient security and privacy. EHR systems use state-of-the-art protection to block hackers and those who might want access to private information without permission. Patients can rest assured their records are as safe as possible.