

# Increasing adoption of Electronic Health Records

For safer, more effective and efficient healthcare



**Atos**

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There is a growing public expectation that patient care – whether at the referring doctor, in hospital or at home – is digitally enabled. At the same time, data will be the vital commodity for managing individual and population health and wellbeing. Widescale, secure digital access to integrated, up-to-date health records is therefore essential to address healthcare's most urgent and fundamental challenges.

When implemented effectively, Electronic Health Records (EHR) enable safer, more efficient and higher-quality healthcare. Yet while EHR is clearly on healthcare's critical path, too often, organizations focus only on implementation, and not on driving

the take-up of new systems. Success depends not only on selecting the right applications and infrastructure, it also requires an effective transformation strategy to ensure long-term, sustainable adoption.

With clinical and medical staff working harder with limited resources, implementing any major change alongside the day-to-day is a challenge. So, how can organizations respond to these challenges when planning their EHR programmes? And what are the critical success factors for embedding EHR into the health ecosystem?

This paper brings together key learnings from Atos and from healthcare leaders who have embarked on widescale EHR adoption. It is aimed as a practical overview to key challenges and approaches for any EHR programme. There is now a huge opportunity to improve EHR adoption rates. At Atos, we are committed to working with healthcare leaders and partners to help deliver the benefits of EHR.

Input into this paper was, in part, gathered at Atos' Annual Health Dinner, attended by leaders and decision-makers in healthcare organizations in the UK and the US. We would like to thank them all for their contributions to a fantastic discussion and to this paper.



# Challenges and barriers to EHR adoption

All healthcare organizations are unique, but research shows that the challenges of EHR adoption are common across the global health economy.

Healthcare leaders report the following key challenges:



## Change fatigue

Inevitably and understandably, healthcare organizations may be suffering change fatigue, with some clinicians and other staff questioning why yet another system needs to be adopted. Reaching all staff can be extremely difficult, with constant and intense pressures on time, budgets and energy.



## Diversity in practice and process

Organizational silos exist between departments, and between clinical and administrative functions, making any wide-ranging implementation a challenge. In addition, ways of working, assumptions and approaches vary within and between departments and institutions; these can be deeply embedded into the status quo, with many not documented.



## Funding and investment

Building a business case for EHR is a significant challenge, given the difficulties of benchmarking and analysing cost benefits in complex operational environments.



## Poorly designed workflows

Many healthcare organizations attempt to replicate their paper processes when moving to EHR; as a result, the benefits of the new systems are not realised.



## Under-investment in training and education

Training is often too generic and not work-flow based – and while many healthcare organizations commit to providing education and training before go-live, very few after go-live to focus on educating clinical and administrative teams long-term.



## Focus on go-live versus long-term sustainability

Many organizations grossly underestimate the effort and resources required to sustain the long-term adoption of EHR.

# Six key lessons from healthcare leaders

To address the challenges and barriers to EHR adoption across both clinical and business systems, here are six key lessons based on the experience of Atos and healthcare leaders in the UK and US.

## 1 Strong senior sponsorship and clinical leadership are essential

Strong senior sponsorship and engagement of clinical leaders are critical first steps. Without engaged and clinically focused leadership, the rest of the steps cannot be achieved successfully and adoption begins to erode.



### Drive key decision-making

Through CEO-driven, clinician-led executive steering for EHR at the strategic level to understand the degree of change required and set priorities appropriately. Most importantly, they stay engaged for the life of the EHR application.



### Maintain momentum

To drive through necessary cultural and organizational change, especially when things get tough, senior leaders need to be well informed and aligned in how they communicate the value of the EHR; they empower clinicians to make decisions about how the EHR should be implemented and used.



### Manage expectations

Expectations need to be managed for senior leaders, users, providers – and patients. EHR adoption is a journey: being realistic about the immediate impacts and engaging with all stakeholders in the reasons for EHR and what to expect around go-live will help to build understanding and ensure a smoother implementation.

"EHR isn't just an IT project: it's about leading wholesale change that we've never experienced before."

Dr Stephen Cone, CMIO, Clinical lead for the EHR project, UCLH

## 2 Be collaborative

Collaboration is more than a nice-to-have: it is essential to drive innovation and build the necessary consensus to achieve widescale organizational, cultural and systems change.



### Multi-disciplinary representation

Planning for and enabling cross-departmental involvement, ownership and understanding will ensure that solutions are co-developed across care pathways – and across clinical and business systems.



### Local versus national

While experience shows that local empowerment and ownership is critical to effective deployment of IT, leveraging experience and resources at a national level, such as through NHSX, can help to minimise risk, accelerate progress, and avoid re-inventing the wheel.



### Working with partners and peers

Accessing proven solutions and expertise from specialist IT and change management partners nationally and globally is important – as is building links with peers to share experience, insight and learning within the health economy.

"The advent of NHSX is an opportunity for more joined-up thinking. We need a network of CIOs and we need to build links at the local level." Tara Donnelly, Chief Digital Officer, NHSX

### 3

## Empower clinical users early

Strong senior sponsorship and engagement of clinical leaders are critical first steps. Without engaged and clinically focused leadership, the rest of the steps cannot be achieved successfully and adoption begins to erode.



### Structured clinical representation

Consider establishing a network of super users, such as a group of Medical Information Officers from each specialty/department – plus an operational readiness group to make decisions on the critical path and feed back into their specialties.



### Early requirements definition

Structure the involvement of a cross-departmental user group (doctors, nurses, IT, admin and the exec) to define requirements as early as possible – ideally before the final vendor selection.



### Testing and flexing

Keep involving the same user group in system testing in order to keep evolving requirements and the solution ahead and after go-live. Train expert users as early as possible to act as change champions and so that they can continue to shape the solution as it evolves.

“We found that physicians were adopting the system faster than we were implementing it, so we switched from an incremental approach to full user empowerment and a big-bang roll-out.” Dr John Paul Jones, Physician, Centra Health

### 4

## Identify and overcome cultural barriers

At the heart of EHR adoption is cultural change – arguably the biggest challenge for healthcare providers today, particularly in the context of an ever more demanding operational environment.



### Devise a transformation plan

Consider establishing a network of super users, such as a group of Medical Information Officers from each specialty/department – plus an operational readiness group to make decisions on the critical path and feed back into their specialties.



### Focus on what makes the most difference to staff

Winning hearts and minds is a powerful lever for change: early wins or high-profile changes could include apps for mobile devices, live voice recognition for keeping records and sending correspondence, and remote access for staff.



### Consistent, sustained communication

This is essential throughout implementation and after go-live, using across multiple online and offline channels.

“We created an environment and spirit of collaboration and the barriers came down...we wanted to empower people right at the start of the digital journey.” Dr Stephen Cone, CMIO, Clinical lead for the EHR project, UCLH

## 5 Drive standardisation

Perpetuating variations between departments – and exceptions based on speciality or grade – will significantly lower the potential to drive out benefits from EHR.



### Maintain strong governance

This should be CEO-driven, clinician-led executive steering for EHR at the strategic level to understand the degree of change required and set priorities appropriately. Most importantly, they stay engaged for the life of the EHR application.



### Identify new workflows

EHR adoption requires changes in workflow to ensure that the system is a useful and valuable tool for clinicians. Redesign processes with minimal variation well before go-live, and identify changes to ways of working.



### Pinpoint best practice

This should minimise variations, create a benchmark, and drive continuous improvements. If there isn't an identified best practice, then select one.

"No matter what size the organization or which EHR vendor, there are some generic lessons: involve people, standardise on best-practice, train thoroughly and manage users' expectations." Dr John Paul Jones, Physician, Centra Health

## 6

## Focus on adoption, not just implementation

EHR adoption requires the continuous process of keeping users informed and engaged, providing innovative ways to help them become proficient in new tasks, measuring changes in critical outcomes, and striving to sustain that performance long term.



### Invest in training education

With training arguably the most important long-term success factor, train super users early, invest in classroom training and real-life simulations of new ways of working, including changes to admin processes.



### Ensure operational readiness

By intensive preparation and user engagement, including regular hackathons, pre-go-live readiness events and checklists, floorwalking and at-the-elbow support from providers, super users and partners.



### Execute a post-implementation plan

Ensure sufficient time and resources are allocated, including continuous evaluation and evolution of the system, introduction of new processes, ongoing user training, use of metrics that gauge effectiveness (not just speed), and redistribution of freed-up resources.

"Driving adoption is about getting the basics right, being forensic about workflows, and then looking for and building on opportunities to make clinicians' working days better – this could be outside of the technology." Tara Donnelly, Chief Digital Officer, NHSX

### Key learning from the US

Research conducted by Atos in the US has led to a better understanding of the most important variables in predicting long-term satisfaction with EHR. Several research studies by The Breakaway Group (now Atos) have identified the four key drivers of adoption of clinical systems and overall satisfaction with those systems after implementation. When healthcare organizations achieve high levels of adoption, they experience less resistance from clinicians, fewer errors, higher productivity, reduced costs, and less stress. Organizations that under-estimate the post-implementation effort required to drive adoption never truly gain the promised value from their technology investment. Through targeted training and use of simulation, EHR proficiency rates of individuals can be increased from 55% to 95%. In the US, Atos has contracted with over 100 hospitals on the basis of delivering over 90% adoption rates through our targeted training approach.

## What's next?

Globally, the maturity of existing EHR systems and approaches vary in terms of technical and digital maturity. Many EHR and EPR (Electronic Patient Records) systems procured are reaching end of life, and many are based on legacy standards and architectures, are difficult to adapt for modern digital innovation and lastly these legacy solutions are highly vulnerable to cyber attack. At the same time, the development and training of users and the importance of business change management are not always recognized.

No matter where your organization is on the EHR journey there are major opportunities to dramatically improve EHR adoption resulting in improved return on investment, staff experience and a vital enabler for future digital transformation in our organization

### Atos: helping you drive EHR adoption

Atos is at the forefront of providing leadership, consulting and advisory services for EHR adoption. We are product-agnostic and bring years of experience in healthcare and technological expertise, a proven track record with successful EHR implementations, and an acute understanding of the criticality of organizational and cultural transformation and stakeholder involvement.

We work with customers in healthcare to embed the four key drivers of adoption of new systems, including EHR:

### Four drivers of new systems adoption



If you would like more information or to talk about your EHR adoption challenges and how we can help, please get in touch with us [here](#)

# About Atos

Atos is a global leader in digital transformation with 109,000 employees and annual revenue of € 11 billion. European number one in cybersecurity, cloud and high performance computing, the Group provides tailored end-to-end solutions for all industries in 71 countries. A pioneer in decarbonization services and products, Atos is committed to a secure and decarbonized digital for its clients. Atos is a SE (Societas Europaea), listed on Euronext Paris and included in the CAC 40 ESG and Next 20 Paris Stock indexes.

The [purpose of Atos](#) is to help design the future of the information space. Its expertise and services support the development of knowledge, education and research in a multicultural approach and contribute to the development of scientific and technological excellence. Across the world, the Group enables its customers and employees, and members of societies at large to live, work and develop sustainably, in a safe and secure information space.

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Let's start a discussion together



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