

Best Practices in Achieving Meaningful Use (MU) of Electronic Medical Records (EMRs) in Primary Care

PI: Kevin A. Pearce, MD, MPH, UK Department of Family & Community Medicine

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Purpose & Methods:

In response to the new HITECH Act, the University of Kentucky Medical Center Regional Extension Center (UKMC REC) was developed in April 2010 to assist primary care physicians in Kentucky to be eligible for incentive payments tied to EMR implementation and quality patient care incentive payments through Medicare and /or Medicaid under the HITECH Act .

As a part of the center's services to Kentucky primary care providers, a formal assessment and research of the opportunities, barriers, lessons-learned and best practices associated with EMR adoption aimed towards meaningful use, while engaging the services of a HIT extension center, is needed for the future dissemination of these best practices into primary care healthcare practices throughout Kentucky and the nation.

This KAN project is engaging ten primary care physicians and their practices being served by the UKMC REC, a HIT extension center, in a prospective research project to produce a compendium of *lessons learned* and suggested *best practices* for implementation of EMRs in primary care towards achieving Meaningful Use (MU) objectives for payment as outlined by the new United States HITECH Act. Information will be gathered from practices using structured interviews, practice reports and focus group activities.

Background:

The recently approved United States Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act provides the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services with the authority to establish programs to improve health care quality, safety, and efficiency through the promotion of health information technology (HIT), including electronic health records and private and secure electronic health information exchange. Under HITECH, eligible health care professionals and hospitals can qualify for Medicare and Medicaid incentive payments when they adopt certified EHR technology and use it to achieve specified 'meaningful use' objectives.

In response to the new HITECH Act, the University of Kentucky Medical Center Regional Extension Center (UKMC REC) was developed in April 2010 to assist primary care physicians in Kentucky to be eligible for incentive payments tied to EMR implementation and quality patient care incentive payments through Medicare and /or Medicaid under the HITECH Act . The UKMC REC is funded by a cooperative agreement between the University of Kentucky Medical Center and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology at the US Department of Health and Human Services. Under the direction of Carol, Steltenkamp, MD, MBA, the UKMC REC will assist practices in assessing practice health information technology needs, selecting and negotiating with EMR vendors, and implementing medical office management and workflow changes to meet targeted clinical outcomes that will qualify the practice for the incentives. REC services include group purchasing for practices without EMRs and on-site assistance in implementing new or existing EMRs to meet the federal Meaningful Use (MU) standards. The center also helps providers exchange health information in compliance with regulatory requirements using available health information exchange infrastructures.

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