CCHIT®

Physician's Guide to Certification for

08 EHRs

A guide to help physicians and practice managers understand the benefits they can expect when Electronic Health Record products have been certified by CCHIT.

Dear Physician:

The Certification Commission is pleased to bring you the updated Physician's Guide to Certification for 08 Ambulatory Electronic Health Records. For the second consecutive year, the Certification criteria have been significantly enhanced. In addition to upgrading expectations in general for Ambulatory EHRs, the Commission now offers optional Certification programs for EHRs to demonstrate specific qualifications for care of children and cardiovascular patients.

When evaluating an EHR system for your office, check that it's CCHIT Certified® for 08. We added 19 criteria to the 200 required in 2007. Those changes were focused on the ability to exchange patient information with other systems, most notably a patient summary. A Certified 08 Ambulatory EHR ensures:

- Additional electronic prescribing features: access to the patient's medication history, formulary, and eligibility.

- Better and safer medication dosing, adjusted for patient weight and other factors.

- Better ability to prevent adverse reactions due to drug interactions or allergies.

- Use of standard formats to exchange basic patient information for continuity of care.

- Enhanced ability to view X-rays and other diagnostic images.

- Better management of patient consents and authorizations.

- Increased use of standard formats when receiving and storing laboratory results.

One thing hasn't changed, and that's the necessity of your doing some pre-purchase homework. While Certification evaluates the EHR product, learning about the company behind the product is an essential part of the purchasing process and remains your responsibility. For the first time this year, we are offering EHR vendors the opportunity to provide you with additional information about the company, its history and its user base on our Web site.

This year we also are extending Certification to emergency department systems, in addition to the option to add child care and cardiovascular medicine requirements to a certified ambulatory EHR. Thank you for your interest in our work.

Sincerely,

Mark Leavitt, MD, PhD
Chair, CCHIT

Alisa Ray
Executive Director, CCHIT

As you prepare to invest in electronic health record (EHR) software for your office practice, you face some challenging questions such as:

? With more than 200 products in the ambulatory EHR marketplace, how do we begin?

? Our physicians can't agree on what should be included in an EHR—is there an authoritative source?

? With all the talk of regional health information organizations, information exchanges, and a nation-wide health information network, how can we be sure our EHR will be compatible with them?

? Everyone is worrying about electronic data and privacy today, so how can we assure that the EHR we buy has adequate security?

The Certification Commission for Healthcare Information Technology (CCHIT®) was founded with the precise goal of helping you answer these questions and select an EHR product with confidence. We have created this guide to help physicians and practice managers understand the benefits they can expect when EHR products have been certified by CCHIT.

The Certification Commission is an officially "recognized certification body" in the United States for EHR products—a private, nonprofit organization that is to electronic health records what Underwriters Laboratories is to electrical products. The Commission is the official agency to apply standards, test products, and award a "seal of compliance" to EHR software. If you buy an electrical product, you expect to see the UL® seal. If you buy an EHR, you should look for the CCHIT certification seal.

As part of a broad federal initiative to create national standards for health information technology, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded the Commission a three-year contract to develop certification criteria and manage an inspection process for certifying EHRs and the health informa-tion exchanges over which they transport patient information.

The Certification Commission brings together panels of volunteers—many of them physicians and nurses—with expertise in electronic health records. After thorough exploration and debate, as well as a review of thousands of comments from the public, the Commission reached consensus on standards-based criteria and other requirements that an EHR product must meet to attain certification.

Certification is voluntary, but in the first year after the Commission began offering certification, nearly half of the EHR companies in the marketplace brought their products to the Commission for testing. Both large and small companies, serving practices of all sizes, now offer certified products.

Professional Organizations Endorse CCHIT

The work of the Certification Commission has been endorsed and supported by a number of physician organizations, including:

- American Academy of Family Physicians
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- American College of Physicians
- American College of Emergency Physicians and Association of Emergency Physicians
- American College of Cardiology
- American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology
- American Medical Association
- Medical Group Management Association
- Physicians' Foundation for Health Systems Excellence and Physicians' Foundation for Health Systems Innovations

What Certification Means

As a provider contemplating purchase of an EHR product, you are about to make a substantial investment in a system that you and your colleagues must rely on for a long time— 10 or 20 years or more. Few practices have the time and resources to evaluate every detail of every product of interest. Relying on certification can help with your selection process.

When you are ready to purchase an EHR, you can use certification to narrow the initial field of vendors. CCHIT certification also assures you of basic functionality. That allows you to focus your evaluation on the special needs of your practice and on performing important due diligence on the companies' track records of implementation success, after-sales service and support, and financial stability.

While cost is a major consideration, an EHR purchase is a critical business decision that should not be based on cost alone. Physicians in practices of all sizes may want to share information electronically with other physicians, hospitals, pharmacies, laboratories, radiology groups, and others.

If its EHR does not have the appropriate interoperability and security features, a small practice and its patients will be at a serious disadvantage in trying to connect up with other providers and organizations.

Certification can also help reduce your risk when you select an EHR. The Certification Commission stays abreast of the new demands that practices face, and ensures that CCHIT Certified® products have the capability of fulfilling those needs. For example:

- Certified products enable you to measure and report the quality indicators needed to satisfy payment incentive programs that are based on levels of performance.

- Certified products qualify under a special exemption to the Stark and anti-kickback laws in healthcare, allowing a local hospital or health system to cover most of their cost for you.

- Some professional liability insurers are offering premium discounts for use of certified EHRs.

CHOOSING AMONG CERTIFIED EHRs

What are some of the questions that a physician should ask an EHR company before purchasing its CCHIT Certified product?

1. Tell me about your company. How long have you been in business? How many employees do you have doing development and offering technical service?

2. How many physician practices do you serve? What size are they? May I speak with a few of them?

3. How do you license your product—for a term or perpetually, by physician or user?

4. What are your maintenance or support fees? Do they cover product upgrades?

5. What are your service policies and guarantees?

6. In addition to what I can expect from CCHIT Certified interoperability, what will I pay for other desired interfaces to products or sources of information?

7. Are there third-party costs for modules or components bundled with your product? Will I need to buy some third-party products independently to make your product perform as demonstrated?

8. Tell me about your implementation and training services. What do they cost? How long will it take until my practice is successfully up and running using your product?

9. Are you willing to put these terms in a sales agreement?

10. What are your plans for staying up-to-date with CCHIT's certification requirements?

→ **You can find more help in selecting and implementing an EHR at www.ehrdecisions.com**

What Does the "CCHIT Certified®" Seal Stand For?

CCHIT CERTIFIED 08

The "CCHIT Certified®" seal ensures that an EHR product meets basic requirements for:

FUNCTIONALITY
Ability to create and manage electronic records for all your patients and to automate the office workflow.

INTEROPERABILITY
Ability to send and receive electronic health data to and from other entities such as pharmacies and laboratories.

SECURITY & PRIVACY
Ability to safeguard patients' personal health information.

→ **For specific certification criteria, visit: www.cchit.org**

Beware of "Wannabees"

Beware of claims that products are "CCHIT compliant." Only the CCHIT Certified seal guarantees that products have undergone the rigorous testing required for certification by the Commission.

→ **The most current list of CCHIT Certified® products can be found at: www.cchit.org/cchit-certified**

New This Year:
Additional Certifications for EHRs in Physician Practice Areas

A main category of certification has to do with products designed to be used in physician offices and clinics— the Ambulatory EHR. In 2006 these products were required to demonstrate 116 criteria, and in 2007 another 96 were added. For 08 the certification requirements were further enhanced, including use of standard formats to exchange basic patient information with other EHRs for continuity of care. Also for 08, new refinements have been added to this category, covering two specific areas of practice.

If you are engaged in caring for children, you know there are needs unique to this population that may not be in an adult-oriented EHR. You'll want to look for an Ambulatory EHR that also carries the additional certification for **Child Health.**

Or, if your specialty is cardiology, you need test results and information that are specific to cardiovascular medicine. Look for an Ambulatory EHR that carries the additional certification in **Cardiovascular Medicine.**

Child health and cardiology are special areas for which criteria have been developed and EHR vendors can optionally elect to meet. Products when tested for compliance must meet all the current criteria for ambulatory EHR certification and also deliver on the extra criteria for the targeted specialty.

Certification of EHR Systems in Other Settings

This year, there is a new certification available for systems for use in the **Emergency Department.**

Certification for systems in hospitals is also offered, with updated requirements this year. The requirements are particularly deep in the area of physician order entry and medication records.

Work has begun on developing certification programs for information systems serving behavioral health and personal health records, with certification to begin in 2009.

What Certification Requires

Companies that apply for CCHIT certification must submit their products to a rigorous inspection process against comprehensive criteria. A jury of three EHR experts—including at least one practicing physician—observes a carefully scripted product demonstration. This inspection takes a full day and covers four distinct clinical scenarios.

One script, for example, simulates a visit by a well child to a primary care physician and checks an EHR's ability to:

- Correctly identify the patient and his parent
- Document and track immunization history, prescriptions, and lab reports
- Provide guidelines for prevention and wellness care.

In another scenario, an elderly man with poorly controlled diabetes, hypertension, and other chronic conditions visits his doctor. In this case, the EHR under inspection must demonstrate that it can:

- Monitor potential adverse drug reactions
- Help with disease management
- Provide treatment plans
- Generate quality improvement reports.

Additional clinical scenarios are being developed as the Certification Commission expands its work into other areas.

The criteria that must be met for a product to be certified by the Commission are developed by a broad team of volunteer experts meeting in multi-disciplinary work groups and expert panels. Recommended criteria are approved by a 21-member Board of Commissioners.

→ **The criteria and test scripts are published on the Commission's web site: www.cchit.org**

Besides specifying the new criteria and tests required annually, the documents include a "Roadmap" that outlines additional criteria that will be required in future years. The Roadmap provides guidance to providers and the industry by offering a realistic time table for incremental improvements in EHR systems. Each year the Roadmap is extended to project criteria two years into the future.

Three Good Reasons to Purchase an EHR Product Today

You shouldn't delay an EHR purchase just because some criteria on the Roadmap are not yet required. There will always be new requirements on the horizon.

1. Delaying could mean that you are also delaying your eligibility for pay-for-performance and other programs. It could take time—two years or more—for you to start up a new EHR system, collect data and implement a meaningful quality improvement mechanism that would lead to your receiving incentive payments under these programs. Waiting could cause you to miss several years of potential incentive payments, liability insurance discounts, and other benefits.

2. In a competitive environment, it might be hard to catch up with medical practices that implement EHR systems sooner. Practices with EHR systems gain a head start in measuring and improving quality, increasing efficiency, and providing better service for patients.

3. Having an EHR is becoming a notable benefit when attempting to recruit new physicians.

What Are the Benefits of Certification?

The Commission tests EHRs on hundreds of criteria within the areas of functionality, interoperability and security. To be certified, a product must meet every criterion. The usefulness of some criteria—such as maintaining a comprehensive patient record, managing orders and results, gaining access to clinical decision support, and enabling quality reporting—is self-evident. Other requirements—such as exchanging data with laboratory and pharmacy systems, protecting the privacy of patient information, and ensuring that back-up copies of your data are created—may not be as obvious, but are critically important to your practice.

Here are a few anecdotes from practices that are using CCHIT Certified products.

→ **Find more information about these practices and the products they use at: www.cchit.org/physicians/learn/studies.htm**

" The financial benefits were important, but our primary objective for implementing an EHR was to improve the quality of care we provide to our patients," says R. Michael Amedeo, MD, a physician with Advanzed Health Care. "The ability to instantly access critical patient information and improve patient compliance with prescribed therapies really sold us on the need for an EHR. "

A TWO-PHYSICIAN PRACTICE

Advanzed Health Care, PLC, a two-physician internal medicine practice in Arlington, Va., decided to implement an EHR system to improve its quality of care while boosting productivity.

The EHR system has enabled the practice to better track and manage patients and to improve care in several areas. Among the benefits:

- The percentage of diabetes patients who underwent a test to evaluate kidney function increased from 4% to 68% in the past year.
- The percentage of coronary heart disease patients on lipid-lowering drugs rose from 58% to 77%.
- The percentage of hypertensive patients with well-controlled blood pressure increased from 45% to 83%.
- The percentage of male patients over the age of 40 on anti-platelet medication rose more than 25%.

A FAMILY PRACTICE WITH 10 PHYSICIANS

North Fulton Family Medicine, PC, located in the Atlanta, Ga., metro area, has 10 physicians and 10 physician assistants who see more than 400 patients a day in four clinics.

Besides helping the doctors provide better care, the certified EHR has improved the practice's financial results. Here are some examples:

- Saved 44 staff hours/day and 11,968 hours/year.
- Eliminated $934/day and $253,978/year in the areas of chart pulls, new patient chart generation, missing chart searches, transcription, lab result handling, referral letters, and medical chart supplies.
- Total cost savings in chart handling equaled $29,920/year.
- Total cost savings in medical clerk wages equaled $9,474/year.
- Total cost savings for file clerk and receptionist: $116,456/year.
- Total cost in nurses' wages for lab result handling: $31,008/year.

**A NETWORK OF MEDICAL AND DENTAL CLINICS,
105 PHYSICIANS**

Community Partners HealthNet, Inc. is a network of seven community health centers that operates 43 medical and dental clinics, with a total of 105 doctors serving approximately 150,000 patients. The North Carolina-based network provides comprehensive medical and dental care to uninsured and underinsured patients, and is funded under Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act.

Some results:

- The EHR has been instrumental in simplifying medical data for patients. Patients are able to view the same information their doctor sees via a laptop computer in exam rooms. Graphs and charts illustrating changes in blood pressure, weight and body mass index, and chronic condition indicators are shown to patients. This helps patients understand their conditions and participate more fully in the care process to improve their health.

- The system develops reports on key clinical indicators, such as the number and percentage of patients with diabetes, by race, whose blood glucose levels are under control.

- Medication interaction alerts are especially useful because the patient population includes so many people with multiple medical conditions and prescriptions.

" With the EHR, I get better and faster documentation," said Elie Osta, MD. "The medical record is now accessible at any clinic, or over the Web. "

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Will we pay more for a CCHIT Certified system because of the fees vendors are being charged to have products certified?
A: There is no evidence that the cost of certification is driving up the cost of products. On the contrary, as certification stimulates the adoption of EHRs, the competitive marketplace will grow, and this effect usually causes prices to drop.

As background, the Commission charges companies to have their products tested; revenue that is earned supports our operations and enables the Commission to be a self-sustaining, independent organization that is not dependent on government or others for its funding beyond the development phase. Each vendor pays the same fee to have their software product tested.

This is a voluntary process but the Commission believes the market value a vendor receives from being certified is well worth the cost and should be considered part of the cost of doing business. While some have expressed concern that the certification fee might be too high for smaller vendors, the pool of certified vendors includes a large number of smaller companies.

Q: What effect will certification have on innovation and competition in the health information technology (HIT) marketplace?
A: HIT vendors will compete and innovate beyond the requirements of certification to differentiate their products and make them attractive to potential customers. Certification is not subjective or comparative. It provides a baseline, requiring products to meet basic standards of functionality, interoperability and security so EHR purchasers have a sound starting point to make more reliable buying decisions. Commission surveys show that newly emerging EHR companies continue to enter the marketplace and seek certification.

Buy with Confidence

The CCHIT Certified designation is the benchmark for EHR products. It is our assurance that your EHR will meet nationally recognized standards and has the features and functions you need to ensure the best quality care for your patients.

→ For a list of EHRs certified by the Certification Commission, visit: www.cchit.org/cchit-certified.

Or ask your vendor:
When will your product be CCHIT Certified?

In selecting an electronic health record (EHR) for your office or clinic, be certain to ask:

Is it certified by the Certification Commission for Healthcare Information Technology (CCHIT)?

Certification Commission for Healthcare Information Technology

200 S. Wacker Drive, Suite 3100
Chicago, Illinois 60606
Tel 312.674.4930 Fax 312.896.1466
www.cchit.org