

Electronic Health Records for the Practicing Oncologist: 2007 Update on ASCO's Role



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By Robert S. Miller, MD

Is ASCO helping me make electronic health records (EHRs) a useful part of my practice?

ASCO has been active in policy development and physician education for EHR selection and implementation. ASCO's long-term goal is to develop and influence the promotion of a core set of elements for oncology EHRs that reflect the complexity

and interdisciplinary nature of cancer care. The association's EHR efforts are tightly integrated with its central mission of defining and promoting high-quality, evidence-based cancer care and optimizing the use of health information technology (HIT) to achieve this goal.

What is the ASCO EHR Workgroup?

The Workgroup was formed in November 2005 by ASCO's Interim Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer, Joseph Bailes, MD, and consists of dedicated ASCO staff and physician volunteers from the Clinical Practice Committee, Information Technology Committee, Cancer Research Committee, and Quality Advisory Group. Patricia Ganz, MD, chairs the Workgroup. Its role is to advise ASCO on how to respond to member requests about selection and implementation of EHRs, and issues of interoperability and standards. Workgroup members also represent ASCO at the Physicians' EHR Coalition, an organization of 23 medical societies committed to helping physicians (especially those in small- and medium-sized practices) assess and acquire standards-based EHR products.

What was the EHR Roundtable and how will it help ASCO achieve the aforementioned goals?

From January 23 to 24, 2007, the ASCO EHR Roundtable, held in Washington, DC, convened a group of stakeholders including clinicians, informatics professionals, representatives from standards-developing organizations, payers, and EHR vendors. The group held discussions about oncology-specific EHR functionality and issues of product assessment and selection by physicians across the spectrum of oncology practice. Discussion focused on (1) the incorporation of the ASCO-developed oncology treatment summary into an EHR and (2) the functional elements needed to fully capture chemotherapy administration data into an EHR system. Development of a report to the membership from the roundtable discussions is currently underway.

My practice would like to evaluate some oncology-specific EHRs firsthand. Is ASCO planning to facilitate any hands-on vendor demonstrations?

Two ASCO-sponsored events are planned for 2007. At the ASCO Annual Meeting in Chicago, Illinois (June 1 to 5, 2007), ASCO will sponsor an EHR Lab, with presentations by selected vendors. Participants will have the opportunity to "test drive" EHR products in a dedicated and controlled environment at the McCormick Place Convention Center, separate from the exhibit floor. Also, ASCO will host an EHR Vendor Challenge later in 2007. Participating vendors will be given identical clinical scenarios and time limits, and they will be evaluated as they "walk through" a typical patient encounter demonstrating the oncology-specific capabilities of their product and the incorporation of the ASCO treatment summary, based on the recommendations of the January roundtable.

Are there any standards or guidelines I should look for when evaluating specific products for my practice?

This has been of great interest in recent months, with much ongoing development. The most visible organization involved with the certification of HIT products is CCHIT, the Certification Commission for Healthcare Information Technology (www.cchit.org). This is a voluntary, private-sector organization, contracted by the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop and evaluate certification criteria and to create an inspection process for HIT in the area of ambulatory EHRs, inpatient EHRs, and interoperable information technology networks. CCHIT evaluates products using a comprehensive set of criteria for functionality, interoperability, and security. The first group of ambulatory EHRs certified by CCHIT was announced by HHS on July 18, 2006, and is detailed at www.cchit.org.

Where can I go online to get more information about EHRs?

ASCO recently launched an enhanced section of [ASCO.org](http://www.asco.org/ehr) dedicated to EHR-specific content (www.asco.org/ehr). Included are pertinent articles from the *Journal of Oncology Practice*, information about government and professional resources promoting EHR adoption, and tools to help physicians assess and implement an EHR system.

In addition, the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP; www.centerforhit.org) and the American College of Physicians (www.acponline.org/pmc/ehr.htm) Web sites have particularly robust EHR-related content. AAFP has tutorials about EHR selection, implementation, and maintenance, as well as news feeds and links to CME offerings. (Access to some of the content requires AAFP membership.) The

American College of Physicians' EHR Adoption Road Map & Tools is available free of charge to all ASCO members when accessed from www.asco.org/ehr.

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JOP Online Moves to HighWire Press Platform

Oncology professionals benefit from a more complete, useful, and effective online browsing and searching experience since *JOP Online* moved to the HighWire Press platform on January 24, 2007.

The new Web site (<http://jop.ascopubs.org>) will continue to house *JOP* articles back to Volume 1, Issue 1 (May 2004), but will now allow readers to take advantage of robust online functionality:

- The ability to search the *JOP* archive by citation, author, topic, issue, keyword, or DOI number
- The option to simultaneously search across *JOP*, *JCO*, and more than 1,000 other top medical journals hosted by HighWire Press using a single login
- The power to customize reading and research by utilizing optional e-mail alerts, PDA downloads of *JOP* content, and PowerPoint downloads of figures

