Catholic Health Partners integrates CDS into its EHR

CINCINNATI – As part of its five-year electronic health record (EHR) implementation plan, Catholic Health Partners (CHP), one of the largest nonprofit systems in the U.S., is integrating UpToDate, its clinical decision support tool, into its EHR.

By integrating UpToDate, an evidence-based, physician-authored and peer-reviewed clinical decision support (CDS) system, into Epic, CHP is implementing an enterprise-wide standard for clinical decision support in all of their regional facilities across Ohio and Kentucky.

“It was a nice way to bring everybody up to the same level and have uniformity in the tool some of our regions were already using,” said Stephen Beck, MD, CHP’s chief medical information officer. “From training to support, we wanted to maintain a single standard.”

CHP completed the rollout of Epic’s EHR in two years on the ambulatory side, integrating UpToDate in the second half of the first year. The health system is currently midway through its inpatient rollout to their 23 facilities.

Adding Infobutton functionality

When Epic enabled its EHR with Infobutton functionality last year, it provided healthcare systems with the ability to access CDS content within the EHR via HL7 messaging. Beck and his department worked closely with UpToDate to implement HL7 capability, completing the process within a few days.

Now CHP clinicians can access context-specific information within seconds in five different areas of the electronic chart without searching, cutting and pasting, or using discrete buttons. As an example, with HL7 Infobutton capability, clinicians can right click on a diagnosis and directly link to UpToDate information on the latest treatment and testing recommendations, contextual to their specific patient. “It’s seamless when it occurs; they don’t exit the workflow,” Beck said. “This is critically important with CDS tools – getting the right information at the right place, at the right time.”

One of the benefits of integration of UpToDate into CHP’s EHR is the absence of helpdesk calls to Beck’s department. Moreover, with no links in need of updating and no internal software to maintain, valuable IT resources can be deployed elsewhere. As its healthcare IT partner, UpToDate has provided superior support, according to Dr. Beck. “It’s been a seamless transition,” he said.

Impacting patient care

Ease of access is important when you consider the impact that clinical decision support can have on patient care. Recent studies have shown an association between use of UpToDate and improved clinical outcomes. Most recently, in 2011, a study conducted by researchers at Harvard and published in the Journal of Hospital Medicine found an association between use of UpToDate and reduced length of stay, lower risk-adjusted mortality rates and improved quality performance.1

Increasing physician satisfaction

The general feedback from clinicians, according to Dr. Beck, is that they “absolutely love” the integration. For those who have been using UpToDate before the EHR rollout, the Infobutton capability has enabled faster and easier access to clinical information at the point of care. “For those who hadn’t used it before, it’s really opened up a new set of possibilities,” Beck said.

As an added benefit of EHR integration, CHP physicians accessing UpToDate through their EHR, earn unlimited AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™. “On top of obtaining supportive information at the point of care for the patient, physicians get AMA credit,” Beck said.

CHP’s Next Steps

While Stage 2 Meaningful Use criteria have not yet been finalized; the proposed criteria do include implementing CDS interventions for clinical quality measures at relevant points of care. As CHP continues to leverage UpToDate clinical decision support within its EHR into the future, it will be easier for the health system to document when it’s being used, according to Beck.

The HL7 Infobutton will become the standard for CHP to exchange information with outside providers and their disparate EHRs and make sure that, for example, different diagnoses and medications are shared across institutions. “It takes us down the path of integrating more and leveraging HL7 messaging to ease the transfer of information across disparate systems,” he said. “We’re not there yet, but this is a step in the right direction.”

Beck is anticipating getting access to UpToDate from additional areas of the electronic chart, making it even more accessible to CHP clinicians in the future.

“We are one of the early organizations using Infobutton integration to this degree,” he explained. “Once providers get wind of how useful it is for decision support, they will be requesting it and using it more often.”

Integrating UpToDate within the EHR, allows CHP to deliver safer, more effective care and allows CHP to “make smart providers, smarter,” according to Beck.

“There are always opportunities to expand our knowledge as providers, and this gives us the opportunity to do so at the point of care,” he said.


About UpToDate

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