Comment on the Use of Electronic Health Records

When the mandate for the use of EHRs included a financial penalty for those who did not use an EHR and a financial incentive for those did use an EHR, I purchased the hardware to support “Management Plus”, (an EHR company located in Utah), based on the recommendation of a fellow ophthalmologist. I found it awkward and slow but persisted because I assumed that it was I who was slow and awkward. Now I have used it for years, and it still is slow and time-consuming. I maintain paper records as well, because they are easier to review quickly and much, much easier to create. My dissatisfaction with the EHR has led me to consider getting rid of it altogether. Whatever I might be penalized, I think I would recover, as I could see more patients and have more time for more important activities such as teaching and research. I work at an academic medical center and tertiary referral center. Many of the patients have complex histories and problems, and many take more time than routine office patients. Having to fill in boxes in the EHR does not improve my understanding of medical problems but does slow me down.

Why should an HER be mandated by the government? However well-meaning the idea, the EHR has not facilitated communication with other doctors or my patients. The reverse is true: the EHR is an administrative burden and expense. None of my colleagues enjoy using an EHR or find that it makes any aspect of patient care more efficient; some have chosen simply to ignore the mandate. I still prefer the phone, a letter, and fax to communicate with colleagues – and so do they.

One of my colleagues who has not purchased an EHR said that he did not know how to type and could not possibly use an EHR. He also has cared for the eyes of infants born with “retinopathy of prematurity”, often with no remuneration. Why should a highly skilled physician who serves the poor be penalized?

I will be 70 in June of 2019. Although I was trained in computer language in college, I know that many who are younger are more facile with computer entry than I. Perhaps younger physicians find the HER acceptable, but why am I forced to adopt a technology that is not helpful? The bureaucracy does not dictate which cell phone I use: why should it dictate how I maintain patient records? Perhaps you should eliminate the mandate for those of a “certain age”!

I you wish to talk with my, please call my office (212-305-5402). Please eliminate the bureaucratic mandate.

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