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POWER YOUR PRACTICE

The path to successful electronic health record (EHR) implementation starts with practice workflow analysis and redesign. While this process isn't easy and takes time, efficiently managed workflow redesign can be the difference-maker to maximize office efficiencies and improve care coordination using EHRs. In fact, a lack of thorough workflow planning is one of the biggest reasons for avoidable losses in productivity and extended work days. Specific areas to address include:

- Appointment scheduling
- In-house messaging
- Patient visit documentation
- Lab results management
- Prescription processing
- Chart migration
- Incoming paper correspondence
- Billing and accounts receivables

Key Steps to Optimize Workflow Redesign

1. **Analyze current workflow**
   Document the practice's existing paper workflows in all areas of patient care

2. **Solicit clinician and staff input regarding roles in current paper workflows**
   Involve everyone who handles paperwork in the analysis and redesign

3. **Review and finalize documentation of current workflow**
   Ensure that the final diagram incorporates the entire "paper trail"

4. **Identify waste and opportunities; then redesign workflow**
   Recognizing the steps that should be changed to improve office functionality; the redesign will reveal the practice's needs regarding EHR system selection and training

5. **Identify and implement the EHR system and new workflow**
   Enlist the necessary support and work with the right EHR vendor to implement a system that meets the practice's needs; ensure proper EHR implementation through staff training on the new workflow

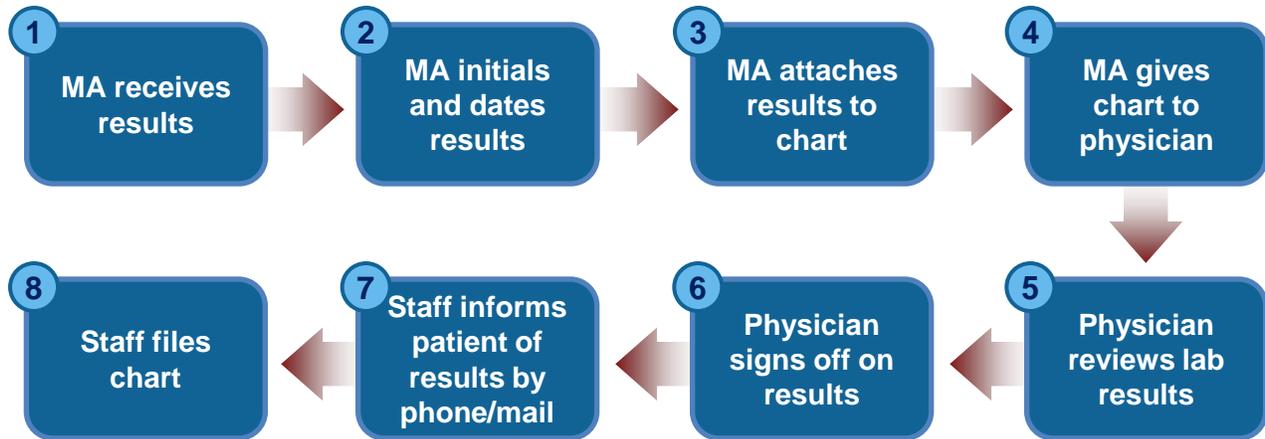6. **Analyze new EHR workflow and refine as needed**
   Continue to monitor the EHR-driven workflow and adjust the workflow to optimize efficiencies

Workflow Redesign Impact:
Lab Results Management

The impact of workflow redesign on office efficiency and staff acceptance of an EHR is evident soon after implementation. How the practice manages lab orders and results is one of several areas that is impacted. The figures below summarize typical practice workflows to process lab results before and after EHR implementation.[1]

Lab Results Workflow: Paper

| 1 MA receives results | → | 2 MA initials and dates results | → | 3 MA attaches results to chart | → | 4 MA gives chart to physician |

| 8 Staff files chart | ← | 7 Staff informs patient of results by phone/mail | ← | 6 Physician signs off on results | ← | 5 Physician reviews lab results |

Lab Results Workflow: EHR

| 1 EHR receives results from lab | → | 2 Physician documents receipt of lab results | → | 3 Physician reviews lab results | → | 4 Physician signs off on lab results | → | 5 Letter generated by EHR; Patient contacted, if needed |

The practice in the above scenario realized a number of improvements to their workflows:
- Efficient electronic entry of lab results into patient's chart
- Improved results tracking and trend analysis
- Reduced chart management time
- EHR-triggered patient follow up, if necessary
- Reduced processing time from 4 days to 2 days

HITEC-LA serves as a support center to make workflow redesign and EHR implementation easier.

[1]Houck, S. (2006). Practice Management News: Avoiding Pitfalls of EHR Implementation. *California Academy of Family Physicians.*