

Beyond Record Keeping: How CC&C Platforms Elevate EHR Value in Hospitals

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Effective healthcare delivery requires easy access to critical information. Doctors and nurses need to swiftly access a patient's medical history and test results in order to make informed decisions, leading to better patient outcomes. Additionally, immediate access to comprehensive patient information can significantly reduce the risk of errors, enhance communication among healthcare providers, and streamline clinical workflows. Hospitals have invested millions of dollars into electronic health records (EHR) to consolidate and store patient information.

Yet, EHRs are just that - a system for record keeping. Healthcare delivery has many moving parts and EHRs were not designed to connect all those parts to drive collaboration. Instead, the EHR's value increases when it is paired with tools that drive action. That's why many leading healthcare organizations have adopted a clinical communication and collaboration (CC&C) platform in combination with their EHR. Together, CC&C platforms and EHRs empowers action informed by data.

Extending the EHR Value

Some healthcare organizations default to the EHR chat feature that is often included with their EHR. Those features have limitations often acknowledged by the EHR vendors themselves who caution against using them during critical care situations or during EHR downtime. The combination of an EHR and CC&C platform optimizes hospital operations by using tools for the purposes they were designed for. The EHR stores data, while

a CC&C platform mobilizes that data by allowing unfettered secure communication among staff.

Integrating the EHR with a robust CC&C platform that includes role-based messaging streamlines collaboration among healthcare teams. Nurses, physicians, specialists, and other staff can communicate in real-time with the right person by role, without needing to be an EHR user. This ubiquitous communication ensures everyone is informed about changes in patient status or treatment plans promptly. Real-time communication helps prevent misunderstandings and delays in care, ultimately leading to better patient outcomes and satisfaction. For example, a nurse can quickly update a physician about a change in a patient's condition, leading to immediate adjustments in treatment without delays. The entire care team can be instantly informed of those changes.

Managing a crisis in real time

The CC&C's role as an integrated, but separate communication system from the EHR also creates a safety net for uninterrupted care delivery during emergency situations. During unscheduled EHR downtime, and planned maintenance, [hospitals need an alternative communication channel](#). Moreover, system outages can occur unexpectedly due to unforeseen circumstances beyond the EHR vendor's control.

Rising instances of severe weather events may lead to more frequent power outages, resulting in EHR and other IT system downtime.

The inability to communicate during EHR downtime severely impacts patient care. Such disruption can lead to decreased throughput, increased medical errors, lost revenue, higher costs, and diminished satisfaction for both patients and clinicians. Another unfortunate aspect of modern technology is the threat of cyberattacks. Far too many hospitals have faced these crimes as cybercriminals target the healthcare industry for ransom demands by bottling up the data in the EHR or other systems. As a separate cloud-based system, though, the CC&C can continue to drive communication and collaboration even when the EHR is held hostage. Additionally, cloud-based CC&C systems offer the added resiliency of redundancy in cloud computing architecture.

A combination ready for the future of healthcare

Lastly, the integration of these systems improves the overall patient experience by fostering a coordinated approach to care. Patients benefit from smoother transitions between departments and healthcare providers, as information flows seamlessly across different areas of the hospital and beyond. Streamlined coordination inside and outside the hospital reduces wait times, improves communication with patients regarding their treatment plans, and enhances the overall quality of care delivery. Ultimately, a well-integrated CC&C and EHR transforms hospital operations by promoting efficiency, accuracy, and patient-centered care, which are critical in today's healthcare landscape. The pair working together also lays the groundwork for the evolution of healthcare. As healthcare and the teams delivering it move increasingly outside the four walls of the hospital, more people will need to be connected and informed. However, some of those people won't need complete access to the hospital's EHR and allowing it could increase risk for the institution. The CC&C can more easily and securely extend to these new providers, keeping them all informed and in contact.

The EHR was built to store and organize information. The CC&C was designed to connect people, systems and that information to drive action. Consolidating hospital communication onto a single platform reduces confusion and wasted steps. It also leverages the investment in the EHR to speed care delivery - today and into the future.