Elation

EHR BUYER'S GUIDE

Avoiding the *Hidden* Costs of the Wrong EHR

INTRODUCTION

Choosing an EHR Is One of the Most Consequential Decisions You'll Make

Choosing an EHR is one of the most consequential decisions you'll make for your practice. The right platform connects and simplifies clinical workflows, reduces unnecessary administrative work, and helps providers focus more of their time on caring for patients. The wrong one creates frustration, burnout, and hidden costs.

The stakes are real. Research from Mayo Clinic shows that every 10-point increase in EHR usability is associated with 26% lower odds of clinician burnout. Meanwhile, 52% of physicians still complete EHR work after hours every day.

This guide walks through the essential evaluation criteria for independent primary care practices looking for a modern EHR.

26%

lower odds of clinician burnout with every 10-point increase in EHR usability

Source: Mayo Clinic national study of U.S. physicians

52%

of physicians still complete EHR work after hours every day

Source: Elation Health 2026 Primary Care Pulse Survey

CHAPTER 01

Clinical Workflows *& AI*

AI adoption is accelerating. According to Elation's 2026 Primary Care Pulse Survey, 79% of clinicians who adopted AI tools use them for documentation, and 72% report reduced documentation time.

KEY CAPABILITIES TO EVALUATE

AI Documentation

Ambient scribing and note generation that actually saves time. Used by 79% of AI-adopting clinicians (2026 Pulse Survey). Reduces cognitive burden in the exam room.

Point of Care Clinical Guidance

Proactive care gap identification, quality measure tracking for incentives and value-based care programs, and evidence-based recommendations at the point of care.

Revenue Cycle AI

Automated coding and claim scrubbing integrated with clinical documentation. Reduces denials and accelerates reimbursement without adding billing staff.

Inbox Management

Tools to triage and manage patient portal messages — the #2 driver of after-hours EHR work (14% of clinicians, 2026 Pulse Survey). Cutting inbox load meaningfully reduces after-hours time.

QUESTIONS TO ASK VENDORS

- Is AI native to the platform or a third-party add-on requiring separate subscriptions?
- What evidence do you have of time savings and adoption rates?
- Does the platform surface insights proactively, or do I need to run manual queries?
- Who provides the underlying AI technology for your platform?
- Which AI capabilities are natively integrated vs. dependent on third-party or add-on technologies?
- How do you ensure clinicians remain in control of AI-generated content?

What to prioritize: Choose platforms built specifically for independent primary care, not hospital systems or multi-specialty groups. Look for independent validation from sources like KLAS Research, which evaluates actual user satisfaction and performance.

CHAPTER 02

Implementation *& Support*

Smaller practices depend on vendor-provided support. The cost structure and quality vary dramatically. The stakes are real: Mayo Clinic research shows every 10-point increase in EHR usability is associated with 26% lower odds of clinician burnout.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- **Included onboarding** with a dedicated implementation specialist who handles chart migration — not an extra-cost add-on
- **Unlimited support** without per-incident fees that create unpredictable monthly costs during training and transitions
- **Robust data migration** including patients, discrete chart data, appointments, notes, and more
- **Established onboarding methodology** with live sessions, videos, and self-directed options
- **Responsive support channels** with urgent SLA available when you need them

The Hidden Cost of Budget Support

Budget EHRs often charge per-incident support fees. A single implementation issue or staff training cycle can add hundreds of dollars to your monthly cost. Transparent platforms include support in the base price — you know exactly what you're paying each month.

QUESTIONS TO ASK VENDORS

- What's included in onboarding, and what costs extra?
- Do you charge per-incident support fees?
- What is your typical implementation timeline for practices like ours?
- How long does it take staff to become proficient?
- Do you offer ongoing learning opportunities at no additional cost?
- Are tailored training and services available if needed?

52% of physicians still complete EHR work after hours every day (Elation 2026 Primary Care Pulse Survey). The implementation process and ongoing support quality directly shape whether your team reaches proficiency quickly — or struggles for months.

CHAPTER 03

Unified EHR + *Billing*

One of the most consequential decisions is whether to use a unified platform or manage separate EHR and billing vendors. The wrong choice creates friction every single day.

SEPARATE SYSTEMS

The Cost of Fragmentation

- Multiple logins and duplicate data entry
- Integration gaps that delay claims and create billing errors
- Staff time reconciling discrepancies
- Updates that break integrations
- Lack of connectivity between visit documentation and claims processing

UNIFIED PLATFORM

The Unified Advantage

- Automated real-time eligibility checking at scheduling
- Clinical documentation flows directly into billing workflows
- AI-assisted code generation: CPT, diagnosis, quality-reporting, and NDC codes from visit notes and chart context
- Eligibility checks: flags inactive or mismatched insurance coverage before submission
- Quality coding: surfaces MIPS and Medicare AWV requirements automatically
- NDC auto-population: fills in NDC, dosage, measure, and units using practice and historical claim data
- NCCI and clearinghouse validation: checks code combinations, units, modifiers, missing fields, and formatting
- Custom payer-specific rules: practices can define rules for specific payers, eligibility conditions, NCCI, or clearinghouse requirements
- Automated issue resolution: auto-queueing that bypasses manual reviews and gets claims ready to submit
- Automations and workflows that keep you in the driver's seat
- Single vendor relationship for support
- Practices report 30–50% reduction in billing administrative time

QUESTIONS TO ASK VENDORS

— Is billing truly unified with the EHR, or a bolt-on integration?
— Do I need separate logins for clinical and billing work?
— How does clinical documentation connect to claim creation?
— Can I choose my own payment processor, or am I locked into one vendor?
— Are RCM workflows intelligent?
— Do you offer tools that eliminate manual, repetitive work, so we can focus on more complex issues?

CHAPTER 04

Patient Engagement *& Interoperability*

Your EHR shapes the patient experience and your ability to coordinate care. The best platforms make the technology invisible — so you can focus on the relationship.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- **Integrated telehealth** from established video platforms with the same workflows as in-person visits — no separate logins or duplicate documentation
- **Patient portal and mobile apps** for visit history, appointments, and secure messaging
- **Automated appointment reminders and recall campaigns** to reduce no-shows
- **Patient self-service options** for scheduling, confirming, and canceling appointments
- **Automated intake** with customizable forms that capture and automatically file discrete chart data
- **Secure, convenient online patient payment options** through a trusted partner
- **Extensive ePrescribing** including med history downloads, EPCS, PMP integration, prior auth, and real-time benefit data
- **Integration with health information exchanges** such as Carequality and state immunization registries
- **Robust interoperability** with hospitals, labs, imaging centers, and quality registries
- **Intuitive interface** that fades into the background during patient encounters

QUESTIONS TO ASK VENDORS

- Does telehealth require separate logins or duplicate documentation?
- What patient engagement features are included vs. add-ons?
- Which health information exchanges and quality registries do you integrate with?
- What payment processor or partner do you currently use for online patient payments, and how well does it integrate with your EHR and billing workflows?
- Are there additional charges or implementation fees for any integrations?

"Your EHR should work for you, not against you. Choose a platform that gives you time back for what matters most: caring for your patients."

CHAPTER 05

Security *& Compliance*

Data security is non-negotiable. Ensure your EHR is HIPAA compliant and ONC certified. This is the foundation — don't compromise on it.

VENDOR EVALUATION CHECKLIST

A

Clinical Workflows & AI

Is AI native to the platform or bolted on? Does it support value-based care without increasing documentation burden? Can you maintain your panel size while reducing after-hours work?

B

Implementation & Support

Does onboarding include a dedicated specialist and full data migration? Is unlimited support included, or do you pay per incident? What is typical time-to-value for a practice like yours?

C

Unified EHR + Billing

Is billing truly unified with the EHR? Do you need separate logins? Can you choose your own payment processor, or are you locked in? Calculate total cost of ownership over 3–5 years.

D

Patient Engagement & Interoperability

Which health information exchanges and quality registries are supported? Are patient engagement features included or add-ons? Does telehealth require separate logins or duplicate documentation?

E

Security & Contracts

Is the platform HIPAA compliant and ONC certified? Do you own your data with the freedom to export it? What are the contract terms, cancellation policies, and upgrade fees?

MAKING YOUR DECISION

Your EHR should work for you, not against you.

The right EHR choice reduces burnout, improves patient care, and supports the sustainability of your practice. Focus on platforms purpose-built for independent primary care, with native AI capabilities, unified billing, and the interoperability you need to deliver comprehensive care.

Choose a platform that gives you time back for what matters most: caring for your patients.

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READY TO SEE THE DIFFERENCE?

The Platform *Built for Your Practice*

Elation Health is the clinical-first AI platform for modern primary care success. Trusted by over 50,000 clinical users and 24 million patients. Best in KLAS for primary care. No hidden fees. Native AI that actually reduces documentation time. Learn more at elationhealth.com.

Request a Demo

50K+	24M	#1
Clinical Users	Patients Served	KLAS Rated

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