

Electronic Medical Records Update: The \$20B Question

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President Obama has been advocating a switch to digital medical records and major health care reforms across the board. As new developments transpire every day on the transformation of the American healthcare system, those of us who are monitoring what's going on in this arena are wondering about a few things.

Take, for example, the underlying assumption that moving the healthcare system into the 21st century with the latest technology is a good and necessary thing. While most of us would agree with this in theory, getting there in practice is going to be a very messy business.

For one thing, doctors are already burdened with enough to do. Shutting down their practices during the implementation phase is unpopular with many of them, and the costs can be prohibitive. Add to that the wide variety of software vendors out there, whose platforms and systems may not easily communicate with the platforms of other providers like pharmacies and hospitals. Without nationally required standards, interoperability remains a big issue for many docs. Finally, there are the patients. A number of patients are reluctant to see their doctors recording their information on tablet PCs and worry about the privacy of their information (not considering, of course, that those paper files can walk out the door in a burglary or get destroyed in a fire).

This is a big nut to crack, and we at PROGGEX are monitoring these issues carefully. We look forward to hearing your views on the digitization of medical records and the evolution of the American healthcare system. Please drop me a line at jim.stroh@proggex.com to share your thoughts.