
HealthPartners Creates the Infrastructure to Deliver Optimal Care

HealthPartners Medical Group, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Keywords: *decision support, diagnostic imaging, EHR, electronic medical record, HealthPartners Medical Group, health information technology, Minnesota, MRI, medical record system, optimal care, PET scans, radiology management, value*

Operating on the assumption that physicians, hospitals, and other providers truly want to deliver the best care for their patients, HealthPartners is creating the infrastructure to make optimal care the easiest care to deliver. For example, two years ago, HealthPartners introduced a radiology management program that reduced the number of unnecessary high-tech images by 7,000 in the first full year of operation—and cut costs by \$6.6 million over what would have been spent without the program.

Excerpted from:

***Health Finance Management Association/Leadership Case Studies
Designing Incentives that Reward High-Quality Cost-Effective Care***

<http://hfma.org/leadership/DesigningIncentives.html>

Radiology Management

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“Under the program, physicians who use a decision-support tool in their EHRs—which informs them of the appropriate test for a given medical situation—do not have to seek approval before ordering scans. Physicians who do not use EHRs can get decision support in other ways (for example, from the referring radiologist or an online decision-support database). 70 percent of HealthPartners members are now treated by physicians with EHR-based decision support.

“Even though radiologists saw the growth of their businesses slow as referring physicians opted for fewer MRIs and PET scans, they supported the initiative because it is part of a communitywide, and highly publicized, effort to reduce unnecessary diagnostic imaging in Minnesota.

“Important support also came from HealthPartners’ Medical Group physicians. ‘Our medical group knew that we and other health plans were going to be doing something to better manage radiology, and asked, “Can we build a clinical capability to address this?”’ says Dr. Pat Courneya, associate medical director. The medical group physicians developed the decision-support content to be used in their own medical record system—and gave the tool to other physicians in the state who use the same medical record system. . . .”

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