Top 10 questions you should ask when interviewing an EHR/EMR company

1. Do you know what benefits you’re trying to get from the EMR? The EMR system will serve you better if you know beforehand what you are trying to accomplish.

2. Will you need to integrate with other systems, such as your reference laboratory or transcription company, or financial application and/or billing? If so, what is the time frame for these interfaces and the cost incurred?

3. Are maintenance services, such as software upgrades, new features, product offerings and customer service (e.g., a 24/7 help desk or other tech support), available? If so, are there additional fees?

4. Will the vendor be responsible for implementing the system? How much time will your staff be required to devote to the implementation?

5. How many hours of training are included? Does the vendor use a "train the trainer" approach? If so, do you have a practice staff member capable of being an internal trainer?

6. During your workflow and readiness assessment, did you determine the most efficient way to handle the conversion of existing data? If you are considering obtaining an integrated PMS/EMR, have you developed a specific plan to ensure that all patient financial information is correctly converted or entered and reconciled to your existing system? Have you determined the length of time during which you may keep both systems operational?

7. How long has the vendor offered this EMR product? How many live sites does the vendor have? Ask for references and case studies to confirm experience and ability to lower costs in other areas.

8. Does the vendor guarantee in its contract that the software provides you with the necessary functionality to comply with all federal and state mandates, and with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy and Security Rules? Does the vendor guarantee that its software can submit and receive HIPAA standard transactions?

9. Are there software license fees? Do you have to buy more than one license? Are software licenses sold per physician or per facility? If so, how are part-time physicians, physician assistants and/or advanced nurse practitioners and other part-time users calculated?

10. Does the EMR provide your management staff with time saving tools such as seamless integration with existing systems, automation of faxing and printing completed reports and notification to physicians regarding report signatures? For your physicians, does the EMR provide web accessible electronic signature, report editing and distributing? If not, can the EMR interface with a company who can provide these time saving tools?