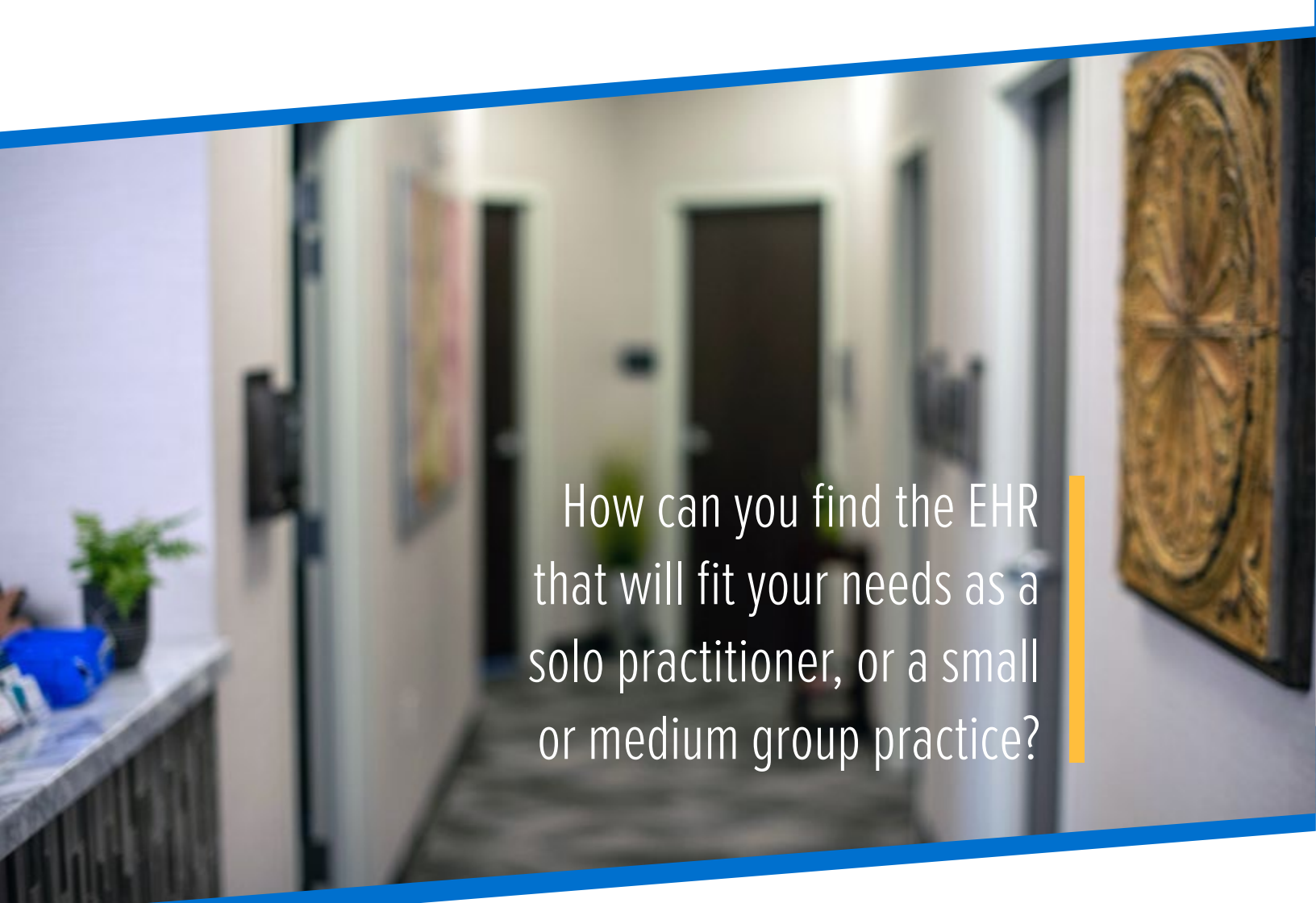




The  
Ultimate  
EHR Vendor Guide  
for Small & Medium-size  
▶▶▶ Practices



AdvancedMD



## How can you find the EHR that will fit your needs as a solo practitioner, or a small or medium group practice?

There are few purchases that your clinical practice will make that have more of an impact on your long-term success than your electronic health record (EHR). But for independent providers and small- or medium-size group practices, finding software that has the features you need and fits your budget is challenging.

### EHR Vendor Evaluation Challenges for Small & Independent Clinics

Many of the most popular and widely used EHR software systems are designed for large hospital systems. The needs of a small or independent clinic can diverge pretty dramatically from those of a hospital system. Software providers showcase their customizable solutions and talk to you about how you can make your practice fit into the confines of the EHR. But that often requires a lot of workarounds and creativity. In the end you probably still won't have a seamless EHR that works well for your practice.

Another significant challenge for smaller practices comes down to staffing and resources. Most smaller

and independent clinics simply don't have staff members with extensive expertise in IT systems and software. If you do have someone who takes care of your clinic IT needs, that person (or small team) probably doesn't have the bandwidth to take on a project evaluating EHR vendors for several months, then overseeing implementation.

So how can you find the EHR that will fit your needs as a solo practitioner, or a small or medium group practice? We've put together a checklist for the features you should be looking for as you compare different software systems, which can serve as a guide in your evaluation process.



# EHR Vendor Evaluation Checklist

Clinical Features | Usability | Integration | Security and Access | Reporting

## Clinical Features: Does this software solution help me provide great patient care?

The first thing providers and administrators evaluate with EHR vendors is what the software can do and how it functions. This is obviously a critical part of your decision process, because without it you have software that won't meet your needs.

Look for features such as:

- Simplified charting
- Customizable templates for commonly treated conditions
- Real-time alerts and notifications
- Clinical decision support features
- AI learning and voice recognition
- Electronic prescribing, lab and imaging orders, and referrals
- Medication management and controlled substance protocols
- E&M and CPT guidance
- Care coordination with providers outside your clinic

In addition to looking at specific features, take these things into account:

### Customization and Usability

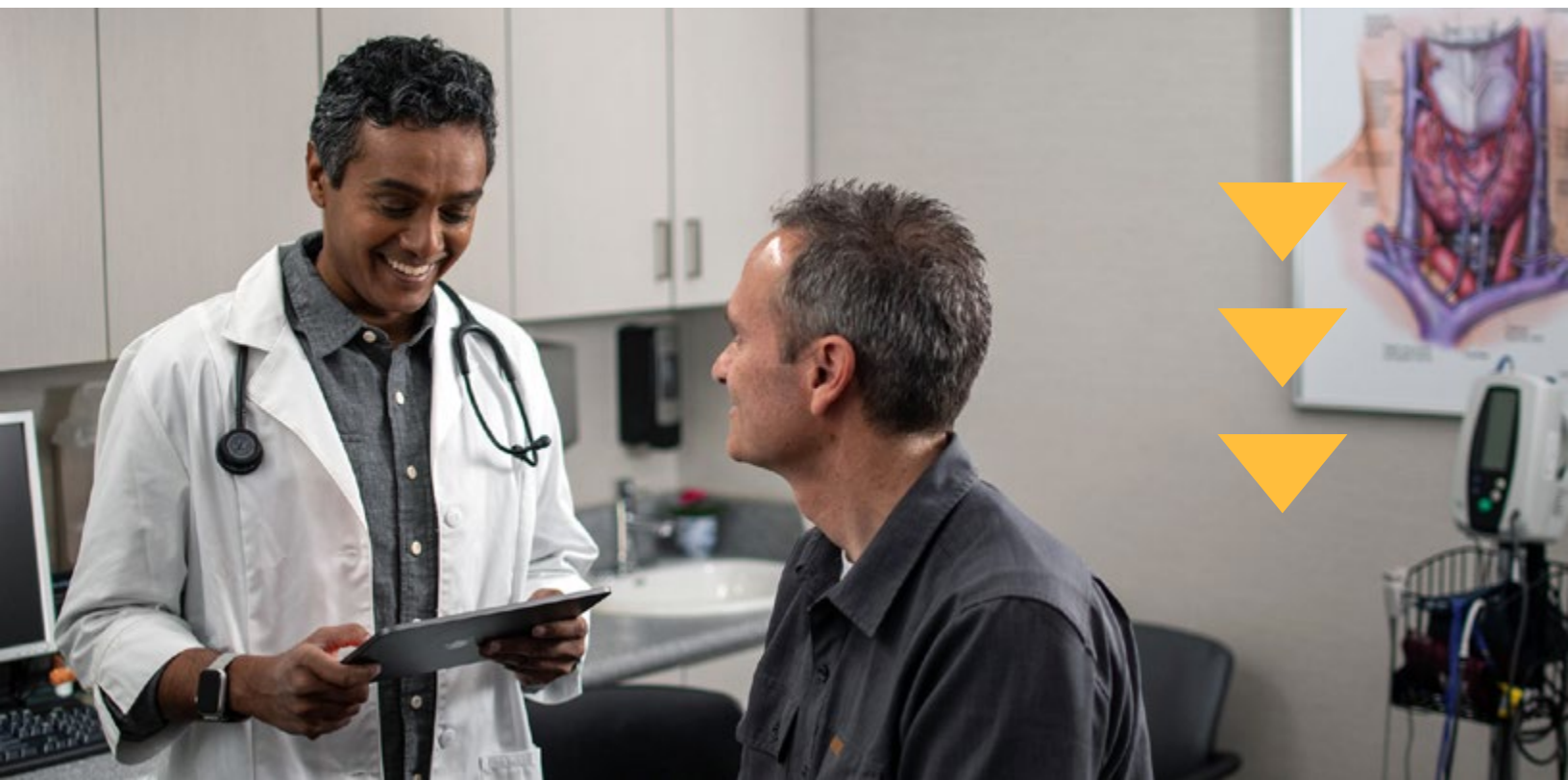
Many software companies build their EHR products with larger hospital systems in mind. They promise “customization” for smaller clinics, but that doesn't always mean the software will be easy to use, or that it will have the features you actually require. For many smaller clinics, that just means you will have to adjust your workflows or processes to fit the software, instead of the other way around.

### Available Features

EHRs built for large hospital systems may have a long list of included features that your staff and providers will never use. Those extra features can actually impede an efficient workflow. You're also still paying for them even if you don't use them, so it can drive up the cost of the software.

### Scalability and Your Budget

Many small practices don't have a lot of cash to invest in an EHR software up front. But choosing an inexpensive option leaves you with little more than a digital version of a paper chart. When you're on a tight budget, look for a modular, scalable system that you can add to and grow over time as your practice needs change and your budget allows.



## Usability: Can our providers and staff easily use this as part of our daily workflows?

EHR usability boils down to one question: will we be able to integrate this immediately into our practice? All software systems will require some level of implementation, but the right solution should immediately fit into your current clinical and operational workflows.

### Inefficient EHRs:

- Increase unproductive “computer time” for staff and clinicians
- Negatively affect morale and job satisfaction in your office
- Contribute to physician and staff burnout
- Lead to worse patient outcomes

Instead, look for efficient EHR solutions that are:

### Simple

A more complex software program with all the bells and whistles isn't always the best. The EHR software that provides you with straightforward solutions based on your clinic and patient needs should be a top priority.

### Intuitive

Well-designed software has an intuitive interface and user experience. Each click should make sense and be easy to find,

and providers or staff should not have to consult instruction manuals or help features for everyday tasks. The best option is an EHR designed with input from actual medical providers, not just software developers.

### Efficient

Avoid inefficient systems with extra clicks, unnecessary pop-ups, or difficult navigation. The best software minimizes cognitive load by organizing tasks in the order that you perform them, and only displaying the information necessary for the task(s) at hand. Efficient software also maximizes face-to-face time with patients.

### Predictive and Forgiving

To minimize mistakes, find an EHR that offers real-time feedback on actions that could lead to an error using algorithms and AI learning features. But mistakes can still happen, so when someone inputs the wrong information into an EHR it should be easy to correct.

### Mobile

Today's physicians, therapists, and mid-level providers are under increasing demand to provide care after hours and outside of the office. Having mobile apps with access to all your clinical records as well as remote care features such as online scheduling and telemedicine can make the difference between retaining or losing patients.



## Integration: Does this EHR integrate fully with our current practice management suite?

There are hundreds of EHR vendors to choose from today<sup>1</sup>, and it is only one part of your overall practice management software. Many smaller clinics build their software portfolio over time, which could mean multiple systems from different vendors.

A fully integrated software solution is always going to be the best option. Systems designed to work seamlessly together can improve information flow and reduce the risk of errors in the EHR or billing process. But if you cannot purchase a fully integrated system now, the next best thing is purchasing a software solution with tools and pathways like application programming interfaces, or APIs, to share information. Vendors should include APIs in their software support.

Software solutions like AdvancedMD already have APIs with many of the practice management and medical billing solutions on the market. But if we don't have one, we'll help you build one. AdvancedMD is also advantageous because you can add on to your EHR one module at a time until you have a fully integrated practice management solution.

## Security and Access: How secure is the platform, and how easily can we access it?

Cybersecurity is one of the most important topics on the minds of healthcare IT departments, providers, and administrators. A 2020 IBM report<sup>2</sup> revealed that healthcare data breaches have the highest costs at \$7.1 million on average, outpacing the energy and financial industries. They also have the longest lifecycles of 329 days to identify, contain, and recover from a data breach. That is 96 days longer than the average time to recover for a financial sector breach. Ransomware attacks in healthcare also increased by 21%<sup>3</sup> in just the first four months of 2021.

Security is a paramount concern for healthcare organizations. Experts predict cybersecurity expenditures in healthcare will be \$125 billion between 2020 and 2025. For smaller clinics, the cost of hiring an internal staff of IT and cybersecurity experts to combat these growing threats is often out of reach. But that can put these practices at higher risk of a breach.

Choosing the right EHR vendor can help. Look for vendors that use a secure web hosting platform. AdvancedMD uses Amazon Web Services (AWS), the same platform used by the world's leading financial, tech, industrial, and energy companies. It offers the highest level of encryption available to keep patient records secure.

Accessibility is also a factor. You have basically two choices when it comes to software:

### Server-based

A local server or computer at your clinic that houses all the software data. You can only access the information from a computer connected to that server. You are responsible for maintaining the server(s) at all times. Someone must continually update the software to protect against hackers and other threats. If something happens — such as a natural disaster or break-in — all your data is at risk.

### Cloud-based

Cloud-based systems house all the data on servers maintained by your EHR vendor. You access the system using a web interface and login, so you can connect from anywhere with a device (desktop, laptop, tablet, or smartphone) and an internet

connection. The vendor keeps your software updated with the latest security patches and pushes updates automatically so you're always using the most recent version. The data is also backed up on redundant servers so the risk of losing the data is minimal. This is the best and most cost-effective solution for almost every clinic.

There is one other important thing to understand about cloud-based and server-based EHR solutions as you are evaluating your options. Some EHR vendors designed their products originally as server-based software and have since tried to transition to a cloud-based system because of the benefits it offers. They may tout a cloud-based solution, but it was not designed for cloud computing, and they hastily converted it to the cloud. These interfaces and connections are clunky or prone to errors, which is extremely frustrating. Look for vendors that specifically designed their software for the cloud.

## Reporting: What tools are available to report internally and externally?

The final item on your evaluation checklist is reporting capabilities. EHRs make it possible to store and track a lot more data than before. As a result, organizations like the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and commercial payers require clinics and providers to report on specific metrics through MIPS & MACRA. Many practices also want access to data to improve clinical and operational efficiency.

Your EHR vendor should make it easy with:

- Automated reports delivered to your inbox at regular intervals
- Customizable features to get the specific data required from various payers and external entities
- Predictive analytics to improve population health
- Simplified data visualization so key stakeholders can quickly review reports and make better clinical and business decisions

Learn more about the advantages of AdvancedMD software and discover why so many smaller clinics trust us as their EHR vendor. Schedule a demo today.

### References

<sup>1</sup><https://www.ehrinpractice.com/largest-ehr-vendors.html> | <sup>2</sup><https://www.ibm.com/downloads/cas/RZAX14GX> | <sup>3</sup><https://healthitsecurity.com/news/ransomware-attacks-surge-102-in-2021-as-triple-extortion-emerges>

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