# FOUR TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL EMR AND DEVICE INTEGRATION
Clinician Input, Optimization, Security and Forward Thinking
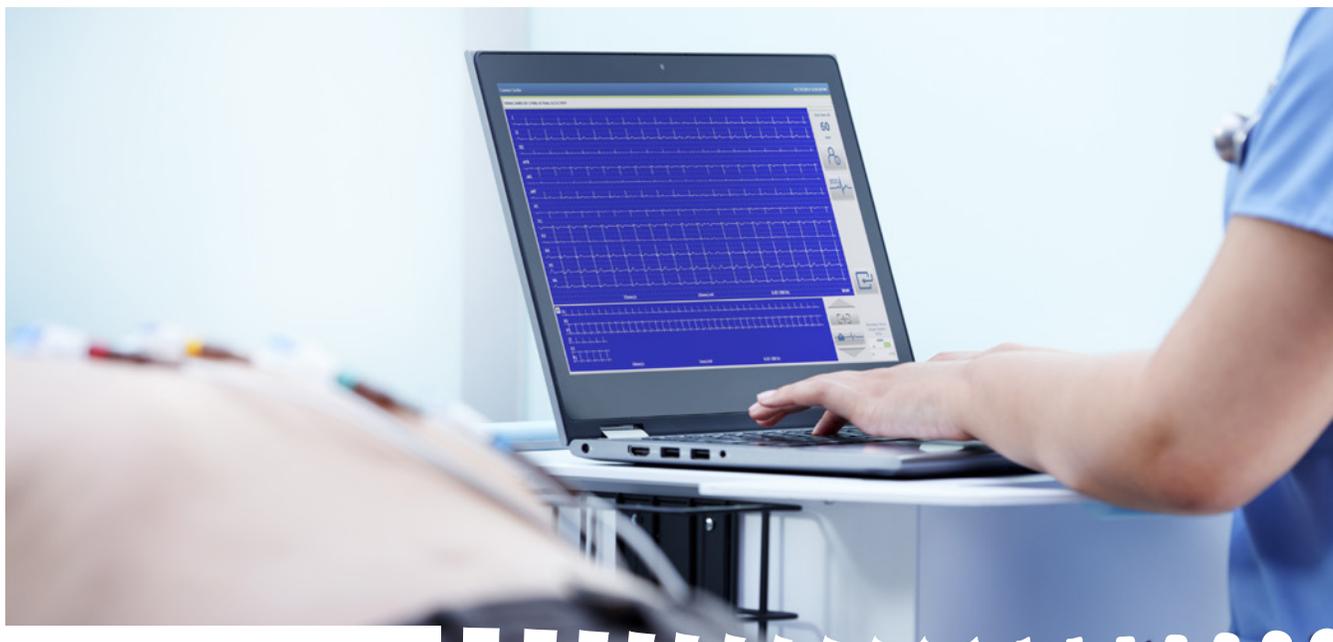


## INTRODUCTION

Introducing a new device into your ambulatory care practice is never easy. With concerns over clinical opt-outs, manual workarounds and data security, executives can find themselves wondering: Will we be able to leverage this IT investment?

Lari Rutherford is senior manager of connectivity at Hillrom, a leading provider of diagnostic cardiology equipment. Rutherford believes integrating any device into the EMR requires a thoughtful, longitudinal strategy to achieve success from both clinical and financial perspectives. A good place to start is with devices like ECGs. They are frequently used in patient encounters and require a fair amount of manual entry if they are not connected to the EMR. Therefore, physicians frequently request ECG integration. When integrating these—or any—devices with your EMR, it's helpful to consider four major points before embarking on an integration project.

## 1. BRING YOUR CLINICIANS TO THE TABLE

Information technology will always be a huge influencer whenever a new device is integrated into the system. Understandably, everything—from the types of interfaces IT is implementing to user end-results— will be based on the department's background and what has proved easiest to manage from an IT perspective. But often, clinical relevance is pushed to the side with real consequences upon go-live.

Rutherford urges organizations to consult with clinicians before making device purchasing decisions. Understand their workflows and be clear on who is using the device and how. Make sure the way the device integrates into the EMR reduces the number of steps a provider must take to perform the test or use the device. "When clinical is a true stakeholder in defining how they expect to interact with their EMR and new device, the collaboration among IT, vendor and provider always leads to a better outcome," she pointed out.

Along the way, IT can evaluate areas where it needs to improve clinical workflow while providers strengthen their engagement with the process since they've been collaborating together from the start. And, with frequently used devices like ECGs, the workflow improvements can make a significant impact practice-wide.

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*— Lari Rutherford*
*Senior Manager of Connectivity, Hillrom*

## 2. OPTIMIZE YOUR INTEGRATION PLAN

With any device integration, aim for the best-case scenario: a technical workflow that provides a reliable clinical experience. But, what happens when your EMR is down, or data isn't flowing properly between device and system? What is your backup plan?

While automating processes is very valuable, you don't want to lock into a situation where providers are tied to one workflow only. "Preparing a backup plan means considering the relative impact of care to your patients," Rutherford said. "To mitigate potential patient health risks, it's important to have a solution that can function in multiple ways."

Rutherford suggests turning to your EMR vendor and device manufacturer partner:

- What support can they offer during implementation to drive the process forward?

- When testing workflows, will they leverage their background with other clients to guide you through the learning curve?

- Will your partners support you with challenges after go-live? Or, will your IT team be left to figure out alternatives during a software update or an EMR downtime?

In the end, organizations should consider the total cost of ownership. The investment in a new device is more than just its upfront cost. Understand how a potential partner's resources and expertise can add value to both product and process.

## 3. ALIGN DEVICES WITH YOUR SECURITY FRAMEWORK

No one wants to make front-page news with a data breach. Security should be a key consideration anytime you're transferring data or adding a device to a network. "But you shouldn't have ad-hoc security for these devices," Rutherford argued. Check with your device manufacturer to see how the controls and encryption methods in place will align with your policies.

Another strategic way to maintain control over device access and data interaction is through user and role authentication. With user authentication, you'll help ensure that users are trained to safely use that network and access patient information. With role authentication, organizations can go a step further and specify the different functions or segments of a network that are accessible based on user role.

Often, Rutherford pointed out, your partner can transfer existing authorizations into that new device, thereby decreasing the effort your IT team will go through to manually recreate those roles.

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## 4. FUTURE-PROOF

Lastly, how will your organization future-proof your new device? As Rutherford observed, "More and more organizations are combining and consolidating their practices, often changing their EMR vendor in the process."

Will that new device be plug-and-play in a different system, three years down the road? Make sure your devices are flexible enough to communicate with multiple types of systems so you're not reinvesting in equipment every time the system changes.

Again, Rutherford urged, look to vendor support to help you succeed with future changes. The right partner will help you understand your options and support you along the way.

While making the decision to integrate a new device in your EMR is never easy, the process can be optimized through collaboration and strategic planning. With a strong IT, clinical and partner team in place, your practice can be on the right path toward achieving successful clinical and financial outcomes.

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