Practical Tips for Reducing EMR Fatigue

By Dr. Azeen Sadeghian

Research has identified a link between electronic medical records (EMR) and burnout. This is a real issue amongst dermatologists. Although some providers can pick an EMR more suitable to dermatology in a private practice, others do not have a choice. If a multispecialty system has selected an EMR, you may be using a system not intuitive to dermatology.

Below are some practical tips to reduce EMR burden and documentation fatigue.

Shortcuts

- Create appointments with your EMR representative (whether virtually or in person) to share your top 2 or 3 pressing hang-ups in documentation. Ask them for help creating shortcuts. This may be in the setting of templates, importing certain data automatically, or shortcut phrases.

- Ask other providers about shortcuts they take specifically for your EMR. If you are able, possibly have a system-wide way of sharing these tips with one another.

Chart in the present

- Train your staff to scribe a portion of your notes while you're seeing the patient, if possible. There are also virtual scribes and dictation technology tools that allow easier scribing. Ask your EMR representative if there is a digital scribing tool that integrates to your EMR.

- Finish your notes quickly after seeing patients. If needed, set up short blocks in between patients to finish small sections of notes.

- Have note taking devices in key areas that help streamline your documentation, e.g., having a tablet, dictation device, or workstation set up in a site that allows you or staff to document closer to your workflow areas.

- Send electronic prescriptions and order labs or referrals at the time of the visit so nothing is missed.

Keep it short and sweet

- Avoid note bloat when possible. EMR settings can sometimes be changed so unnecessary information isn't auto-populated.

- Keep notes to pertinent positives (or negatives), short phrases, and bullet points if needed.

- If a patient has a complicated and pertinent history, have a very brief summary of the patient that can be pulled forward to each note.

Training

- Invest time in training staff on charting. Utilize any instructional videos your EMR provides to train new staff on navigating the EMR.

- Create a handbook or preference sheet for charting. Make it accessible for any staff that floats between providers. The more charting your staff is able to do correctly, the less time you'll spend doing or correcting notes.