

From Resistance to Reliance: Sustaining EMR Adoption at Narayana Health

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Abstract. Adopting Electronic Medical Records (EMR) in healthcare is often difficult due to behavioral and technical issues. This case study explores the journey of EMR implementation at Narayana Health (NH), a leading hospital in India. After trying outsourced EMR systems, NH built its in-house ATHMA application. During implementation, challenges were faced, including doctors' resistance, software adaptability, and sustaining the adoption. Dr. Sreenivasan Narayana (VP EMR), overcame these challenges using strategic approaches to achieve an initial adoption. However, he faced a critical decision point to choose between either enhancing software features, or managing doctors' endless requirements for longer term adoption. Designed for courses in Organizational Behavior and Information Systems, this case provides insights into behavioral dynamics, socio-technical challenges, and the long-term adoption of technology implementation.

Keywords: digital health, change management, technology implementation, health information systems.

1. Introduction

Narayana Health (NH), a leading corporate hospital in India, is renowned for its expertise in cardiac surgery. Despite challenges with the previous EMR system, NH launched its home-grown Hospital Information System (HIS) called ATHMA (Advance Total Hospital Management Application). However, the implementation of Electronic Medical Records (EMR) proved to be the major stumbling block in the hospital's digital transformation journey. Taking gradual steps toward implementation, Dr. Sreenivasan Narayana, the vice president of EMR, and his team successfully trained and onboarded doctors onto the EMR module across the NH group. However, just as the team started to celebrate its success, a concerning pattern emerged – doctors started making endless new demands for modifications in the EMR. Despite a successful rollout, sustaining adoption proved challenging. While most of the doctors were trained successfully

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and began using the software, some doctors were reluctant to adopt the EMR. Even those using it saw opportunities for improvement in speed, technical support, internet bandwidth, managing high patient load, and the software limitations to adapt to different medical specialties. Frustrations grew as doctors began with endless requirements to be met quickly, with some even considering discontinuing EMR usage.

Dr. Sreenivasan faced a critical dilemma... to ensure sustained EMR adoption at NH, he must decide between two pressing priorities. Should he focus on enhancing software features, which might overburden the already stretched technical team? Or should he prioritise managing doctors' evolving demands, without which they might abandon the EMR system? With time pressing, he had to act fast to find strategic ways to ensure long term EMR adoption at NH.

2. Electronic Medical Record (EMR) Overview

The healthcare sector had transitioned from traditional paper-based records to integrated EMR systems. This shift enhanced efficiency in clinical documentation, decision support, and computerized provider order entry (Gillum, 2013). EMRs stored patient health histories securely and digitize the entire patient workflow (See Exhibit 1 on the following page). Unlike Electronic Health Records (EHR), which facilitate data sharing across healthcare providers, EMRs were designed for use within a single practice.

Despite its benefits, EMR adoption faced challenges, primarily behavioral, organizational, and environmental. Barriers included resistance to change, lack of leadership support, poor user interface, and inadequate regulatory frameworks infrastructure (Adler-Milstein & Bates, 2010; Weeger & Gewald, 2015). Among these, behavioral resistance was the critical factor, as successful EMR adoption depends on managing stakeholder expectations during the transition (Rahal et al., 2021).

Global EMR Adoption and Trends

Since 2012, the adoption of EMR had increased globally (Slawomirski et al., 2023). Government policies and the shift toward cloud-based EMR solutions drove this growth (Pawar, 2025). Growing trends of EMR adoption had increased the focus on data security and privacy. This led governments and healthcare firms to strengthen cybersecurity protocols and quality audits (Slawomirski et al., 2023). Another emerging trend was the collection of patient-reported outcomes (PROMs) and experiences (PREMs). However, systematic implementation remained limited (Slawomirski et al., 2023). AI integration and improved interoperability were considered emerging efforts to further enhance EMR efficiency.