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Study Ranks EHRs for Small Practices

By Robert Lowes

An electronic health record (EHR) system called *eClinicalWorks* is ranked number 1 for small medical practices in a new report published last week by IDC Health Insights, a research and consulting firm.

The software and its manufacturer, also called eClinicalWorks, are no strangers to accolades. Last fall, an IDC report on EHRs for midsized and large medical groups named eClinicalWorks as 1 of 4 vendors poised for long-term market leadership. In addition, eClinicalWorks was the number 1 EHR (sometimes called an electronic medical record, or EMR) vendor among practices with 26 to 100 physicians in 2009 and 2010, as ranked by the research firm KLAS.

The most recent IDC report evaluates 9 vendors and 11 of their software products in terms of current strengths and potential to gain market share in the near future. It weighs factors such as the breadth of software functionality, compatibility with mobile devices and delivery models such as cloud computing, and a vendor's financial stability.

IDC Health Insights identifies the eClinicalWorks EHR as the sole occupant in its "leaders" category. The software "should be considered a strong choice for practices that want a cost-competitive, innovative, highly configurable solution," the report states.

The EHRs that IDC Health Insights ranks number 2 and 3 are *Optum Physician EMR* and Greenway Medical Technologies *PrimeSUITE*, respectively. The report classifies both in its "major player" category.

As befits the age of cloud computing, the top 3 programs on the list all can be accessed online just with a Web browser. This model, sometimes also called "software as a service," is the sole platform for Optum Physician EMR and an option with eClinicalWorks and PrimeSUITE. Healthcare technology experts say cloud-based EHRs make sense for small practices short on cash and computer know-how. Such programs make it unnecessary to buy an expensive server to host the software and data. Subscribing to the software month by month also shrinks upfront costs, and practices need not worry about computer chores such as server maintenance and software upgrades, as they happen on the vendor's end.