



TRENDS REPORT

Top Trends in Connected Health:

The Benefits—and Challenges—of Advanced Interoperability

Produced by:

xtelligent
HEALTHCARE MEDIA

nextgen[®]
healthcare

Introduction

With more care being pushed to ambulatory rather than inpatient settings, clinical data must be able to follow a patient's journey across a much broader ecosystem. What's more, current policies—namely, the 21st Century Cures Act and the CMS Interoperability and Patient Access Rule—have spurred efforts to facilitate data sharing across the healthcare industry by mandating requirements for exchanging health information and limiting information blocking.

Health data exchange is a necessary component to enhance healthcare delivery, yet the capability to participate in electronic information sharing varies across the continuum of care. Limited interoperability and data sharing prevent healthcare organizations from accessing high-quality information vital for effective patient care and proper reimbursement. Important information often remains locked behind technological barriers, leading to inefficient and incomplete patient care.

However, efforts to integrate health information systems and data are accelerating and remedying disjunctions between organizations and infrastructure, liberating patient information across the industry. Emerging connected health platforms powered by interoperability tools enable the exchange of crucial patient data between provider organizations and allow them to collaborate efficiently to improve health outcomes for patient populations.

When properly implemented and optimized, connected health technology will integrate

disparate data from different organizations and health IT systems and a path toward a deeper understanding of patient populations and care management strategies. Moving forward, organizations will rely on electronic information exchange tools to improve care quality, boost patient satisfaction, and enable data-driven clinical analytics and decision-making.

Health It Adoption in Ambulatory Care

To fully understand the benefits and challenges of connected health IT in ambulatory care settings, NextGen Healthcare commissioned Xtelligent Healthcare Media to survey medical practice leaders. This survey is the third in a series to monitor ambulatory health IT adoption. This report focused explicitly on connected health solutions to understand provider perceptions of and expectations for technology and the challenges to optimizing interoperability.

In total, 100 ambulatory care facility leaders answered the survey. These individuals included decision-makers such as CIOs, deputy CIOs, and clinical IT specialists from various organizations, including primary care, behavioral health, and specialty care practices. Of the organizations surveyed, 93% had more than 25 providers.

This report addresses ambulatory care organizations' considerations in pursuing interoperable health IT infrastructure. Results from the survey illuminate three significant connected health trends among interested stakeholders.

Three Key Trends in Connected Health

- 1.** Healthcare organizations consider interoperability integral to their strategies for better coordinating patient care, with **76% of survey respondents** seeing a direct connection between having an interoperability solution and achieving better patient outcomes.
- 2.** Integrating an interoperability solution with a provider's EHR technology represents a significant challenge to **57% of responding healthcare organizations**, especially those lacking the personnel needed to maintain additional IT infrastructure. Cost also represents a considerable challenge, both from purchasing a new interoperability solution and optimizing the solution to meet the practice's needs.
- 3.** **65% of organizations** believe an interoperability solution will improve provider workflows. Additionally, **83% of surveyed providers** want interoperability solutions that offer both convenience (e.g., ease of use) and automation (e.g., ease of access to actionable health information) to support clinical decision-making, leading to better patient outcomes.

As healthcare transitions to value-based care, health IT solutions help organizations streamline workflows, gather better data, coordinate care more effectively, and enable a population health-based approach to care. Government action and industry improvement have accelerated progress toward industry-wide interoperability. Still, interoperability continues to evolve as new capabilities are developed and implemented widely, prompting the need for continued advancement.

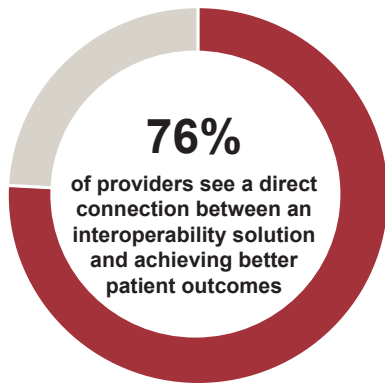


Trend 1:

Healthcare organizations view interoperability as key to patient experience and outcomes.

Healthcare organizations consider an interoperability solution integral to their strategies for coordinating patient care. **Survey results found that 66% of providers believe that their interoperability solution positively impacts the patient experience.** An interoperability tool can

reduce medical errors by supporting decision-making with data from multiple sources. This increased efficiency is a benefit to providers that enhances patient care.



A direct connection exists for 76% of providers between having an

interoperability solution and achieving better patient outcomes. Using information provided by interoperability solutions, providers can track patient populations and identify timely clinical interventions that improve results and support population health.

Moreover, data exchange tools allow smooth care transitions by unleashing information hosted across different software platforms. **Accordingly, 70% of**

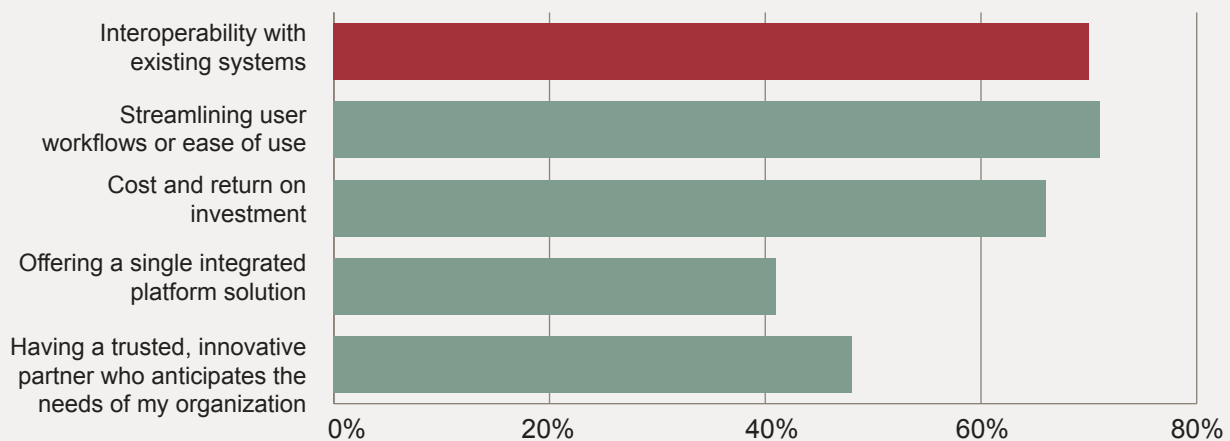
providers see these tools as an opportunity to build interoperability across their own existing health IT infrastructure, combining data that may have been siloed before.

When presented with a new patient or seeing a patient again after an extended period, physicians often conduct duplicative tests that can affect the cost of care and upset patients. This is a considerable problem for physicians, and **44% see interoperability tools as providing a solution.** Armed with a culmination of patient data, physicians can avoid medical mistakes and adhere to best practices.

Furthermore, interoperable systems generate patient engagement, involving consumers in their care and making more of their data visible. Growing patient engagement builds trust between providers and their patients and allows patients to claim accountability for their own care.

Above all, building a connected health platform that promotes well-rounded interoperability assures that clinicians aren't missing out on data from other providers. These tools tie together existing health information to avoid medical errors and improve the coordination of health data.

Most Important to Providers When Selecting a HIT Solution



Trend 2:

Providers are experiencing financial barriers as they pursue interoperable health IT.



Combining an interoperability solution with a provider's EHR represents a significant challenge to healthcare organizations, especially when organizations lack the personnel needed to maintain IT infrastructure and make it work with the new solution.

For 57% of organizations, integrating an interoperability solution with their existing EHR is the most critical challenge they face when optimizing their health IT. Without integrated EHRs, provider organizations often face an uphill battle when coordinating clinical and financial information.

Likewise, 34% of organizations also struggle to procure the workforce needed to manage their health IT, and 51% of providers see interoperability as requiring even an additional level of IT infrastructure. Organizations still see interoperability and new health IT as an asset demanding many resources. While interoperability benefits clinicians and patients, providers worry that it will require too many IT resources.

Beyond hiring new staff, provider organizations feel preoccupied with training existing employees.

To optimize their health IT platforms, 56% of organizations direct resources to education and training. Provider organizations, therefore, are looking for tools that they can plug and play, giving a wide range of employees the ability to

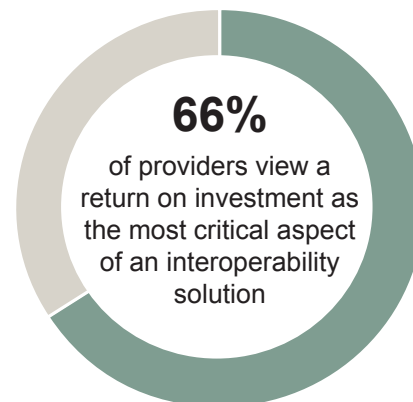
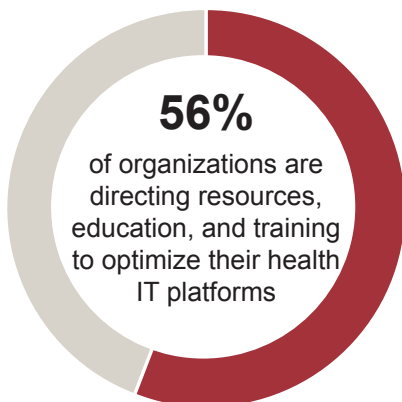
benefit from one interoperability solution. The more accessible a solution is, the greater the benefits providers can create.

Additionally, cost represents a significant challenge from the perspective of purchasing a new interoperability solution and optimizing that solution to meet the practice's needs. **Nearly half of providers (47%) recognize the cost of implementation as the biggest challenge to optimizing their interoperability solutions.** This barrier to entry precludes organizations from experiencing the benefits of interoperability and witnessing connected health's eventual savings.

In the same vein, reducing cost is a high priority for 57% of providers when purchasing a new interoperability solution.

Health data exchange comes at a cost, sometimes in fees for subscribing to regional health information networks or developing one-off interfaces to communicate with other providers. 43% of providers struggle to find financial support for these solutions.

For an interoperability solution to be an effective tool, it must have ease of use and a certain level of affordability. **For providers, this balance is essential, and 66% of providers view a return on investment as the most critical aspect of an interoperability solution.**



Trend 3: Providers foresee interoperability streamlining workflows and automating tasks.

Most organizations (65%) believe that an interoperability solution is likely to impact provider workflows positively. While providers can occasionally face technology fatigue in the modern workplace, an interoperability tool is expected to reduce the number of clicks needed to complete a task and alleviate the provider burden.

Accordingly, the goal of 83% of providers is an interoperability solution that improves the convenience and automation of their health IT. Optimized solutions promote usability for all staff, reducing the complexity of the full suite of IT solutions. An interoperability solution accomplishes this by automating and standardizing the exchange of information between different technologies.

Current standards for data exchange work to normalize language across technological platforms for a simplified connected health system. But provider organizations are still working with a diverse array of information. As a result, they expect interoperability solutions to organize different formats and deliver data without extensive provider intervention.

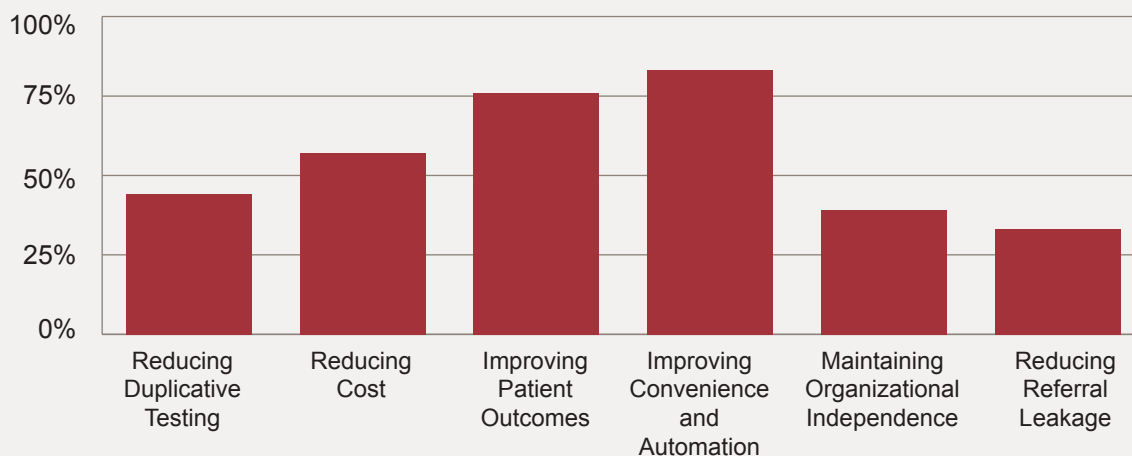
Unsurprisingly, 41% of providers are looking for a single integrated technology solution. In providers' eyes, interoperability should enable the culmination of information from disparate sources, removing the need for lots of switching between different pieces of software.

For 71% of providers, a streamlined and automated solution is the goal. Putting timely and accurate data in the hands of patient-facing clinicians will reduce time to decision, avoid unnecessary testing, and rein in costs associated with care delivery.

In addition, providers want a solution that helps manage referral patterns to keep patients in-network (33%) so that providers will have greater visibility into the patient's care journey.

Using one solution that draws patient data from other networks can reduce referral leakage and maintain patient information if they visit out-of-network providers. Most of all, interoperability solutions alleviate the burden on patients and providers to continually communicate between different health systems to procure essential data.

Desired Interoperability Outcomes



Conclusions

An interoperability solution is key to unlocking the potential of health data to improve care quality and delivery. Interoperability grants clinicians more time with patients and offers a fuller understanding of patients' health records between many organizations and different tools. In turn, organizations can leverage these tools to generate better patient information that helps to reduce the cost of inefficiencies and referral leakage.

Providers see the ideal solution as a convenient cost reducer that increases clinical efficiency by automating the clinician's tasks within the

connected health platform. But solutions must be affordable and easy to use for staff across an entire organization.

An optimized interoperability solution eliminates the strain of working with several health IT solutions by efficiently integrating existing IT infrastructure with relevant data from external sources. In the long run, provider organizations seek solutions that align with their budgets and workflows.

Produced by:



About NextGen Healthcare:



NextGen Healthcare, Inc. (Nasdaq: NXGN) is a leading provider of ambulatory-focused technology solutions. We are empowering the transformation of ambulatory care—partnering with medical, behavioral, and dental providers in their journey to value-based care to make healthcare better for everyone. We go beyond EHR and PM. Our integrated solutions help increase clinical productivity, enrich the patient experience, and ensure healthy financial outcomes. We believe in better. Learn more at nextgen.com, and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#).