Why Change Management is Essential

Change management is the process of supporting people through change. Resistance to change is a very normal reaction and, as change leaders, you may face some form of resistance to implementing an electronic medical record (EMR). An action plan can proactively manage people and change, and can help with any resistance.

Recognizing Resistance

Change reactions can vary from uneasy, uncomfortable feelings to angry or obstructive behaviour. You need to differentiate between a normal, healthy change reaction and a reaction that is an obstacle to successfully implementing your EMR.

You can recognize resistance by understanding how it looks, sounds and feels:

- Looks like – arms crossed, eyes rolling, head shaking
- Sounds like – silence, snort, sidebar conversation
- Feels like – tension, boredom, anger

What causes resistance?

- Fear of the unknown – No clear articulation of how the change will be an improvement
- Distrust – Lack of trust in administration, leaders or change agents based on past experiences
- Lack of information – No communication regarding the vision and reasons for implementing the EMR have been communicated
- Lack of involvement – Staff have not been involved in the decision-making process and feel the change is being done to them instead of with them
- Complacency – No incentive to participate

Overcoming Resistance

There are five components to managing change and overcoming resistance: vision, skills, incentives, resources and an action plan. Problems arise when a component is missing as indicated in the table below.

Change Reaction	Vision	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action Plan
Confusion		✓	✓	✓	✓
Anxiety	✓		✓	✓	✓
Gradual Change	✓	✓		✓	✓
Frustration	✓	✓	✓		✓
False Starts	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Action Plan

A change management action plan reduces inefficiency and disorganization. By developing a plan, you can avoid false starts. As a change team, work with staff to develop an action plan with clear milestones.

Vision

Without vision, there is no shared sense of clinic direction, resulting in confusion and misinformation. There are multiple ways to communicate the direction of the EMR implementation to staff:

- Clearly stating vision and purpose, at the onset, and be prepared to reinforce with an individual or group
- Conducting information sessions such as "lunch and learns" or evening events
- Communicating the reasons and benefits for implementing the EMR
- Describing the change in detail
- Including the staff in implementation activities and decision making, which promotes individual ownership and accountability for success
- Outlining who is ultimately responsible for the decision and provide a means for feedback from staff to the decision makers

Skills

When it is determined that individuals do not have the skills and ability to use the new technology or business processes, it creates anxiety. Anxiety may be overcome by:

- Understanding if there are computer literacy issues within your clinic and providing opportunities to learn required computer skills
- Developing a training plan and communicating and delivering the plan
- Engaging the staff in identifying what you would like to maintain versus what can be changed
- Respecting the past by spending time with staff to understand current processes and business flows
- Meeting with the staff on a regular basis to develop common approaches and new processes in alignment with the goals of the EMR implementation

Incentives

Incentives may assist with increasing the rate of change. Examples of incentives include:

- Reducing the number of patients seen in the clinic, particularly during training and go-live, which allows the clinic to adjust to new processes, learn to use the product and deal with the unexpected
- Compensating staff for additional time
- Planning celebrations for team achievements

Resources

Without proper resources (for example, equipment, training, social or emotional support), staff may become frustrated with the EMR implementation. Resourcing issues may be overcome by:

- Recruiting strong champions and sponsorship for change
- Determining if necessary resources are available to make the change become reality
- Implementing change in a staged approach, which eases disruption and facilitates demonstration of the benefits of the change as quickly as possible
- Encouraging great work and coaching staff who are struggling
- Anticipating disruptions – it takes time to adjust and restore equilibrium
- Meeting regularly (weekly or even daily) allows people to express issues and work together on solutions
- Staging the training approach into initial and advanced phases:
    - Initial training – prepares physicians and staff for basic skills needed to begin using the EMR
    - Advanced training – consider this as a continuous training program advancing the skills of staff in using additional functionality within the EMR (usually three to six months after implementation)
- Asking for assistance and coaching from a peer mentor
- Offering sustained support for new users of the EMR
- Planning for lower productivity levels for the first three months following go-live
- Participating in the EMR vendors focus groups and user conferences

Additional Change Management Resources

Infoway's A Framework and Toolkit for Managing eHealth Change
https://www.infoway-inforoute.ca/index.php/resources/guides-workbooks/doc_download/88-a-framework-and-toolkit-for-managing-ehealth-change

eHealth Ontario's Guide to Change Management
https://www.infoway-inforoute.ca/index.php/resources/video-gallery/doc_download/726-guide-to-change-management-ehealth-ontario-2010-22