

What is CCHIT and Should My EMR/EHR Be Certified?



An excellent article on EHRs and CCHIT was pointed out to me recently and I thought I'd pass it along to my readers. To answer the question "What is CCHIT?", the site **SoftwareAdvice** says this:

CCHIT is a private, non-profit organization formed to certify EHRs against a minimum set of requirements for functionality, interoperability and security. It was founded in 2004 by three industry associations (HIMSS, AHIMA and the Alliance (no longer in operation.)) It was subsequently funded further by the California Healthcare Foundation and a group of payers (e.g. United HealthGroup), providers (e.g. HCA) and software vendors (e.g. McKesson). In 2005, CCHIT was granted a \$2.7 million contract by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to support its mission. A number of other medical associations have since supported CCHIT. Despite the HHS contract, CCHIT is not an extension of the federal government.

*As of March 2009, **Eighty-some** ambulatory EHRs received certification against the 2006 CCHIT criteria, sixteen EHRs received certification against the more rigorous 2007 criteria and twenty have achieved CCHIT certification for the 2008 Ambulatory EHR criteria. We estimate this equates to roughly 30% of all ambulatory EHRs being certified, while additional EHR vendors are currently pursuing certification for their systems.*

In the article, SoftwareAdvice's founder and owner, Don Fornes, also goes on to answer the questions:

- What are the benefits of CCHIT?
- Why does CCHIT generate some controversy?
- Why doesn't every vendor just get certified?
- What are the criteria used by CCHIT to certify EHRs?
- What important criteria does CCHIT not evaluate?
- Does CCHIT evaluate specialty EHRs or templates for specialists?
- Will CCHIT result in higher prices for EHRs?
- Will a CCHIT-certified EHR improve my practice's income?
- Do I need a CCHIT-approved EHR to participate in my local HIE?

and ends with conclusions, recommendations and five key takeaways for helping you determine your path with EHRs and CCHIT.

Because I had never come across the **SoftwareAdvice** site before, I spoke with Houston Neal from Software Advice to understand what the site is and how it works. Houston told me that the company has been helping healthcare entities choose practice management and **electronic medical records** software for almost 2 years and that the goal of the service is to help physicians develop a short list of vendors specific to their specialty and software needs. There is no charge to the physician, but the software companies pay a referral fee to Software Advice. Not all software vendors are represented on the site, but the company is working to get all vendors on board, and their representatives may discuss non-participating vendors if the needs of the physician warrant it. Although I've not tried their service, it seems like a win/win situation if practices can get free software vendor recommendations based on a needs analysis. I'd be interested in knowing if anyone out there has used SoftwareAdvice and what your feedback is.

By the way, in case you're wondering, Houston confirmed for me that the way to pronounce "CCHIT" is either "SEA-CHIT" or "C.C.H.I.T." Thought you'd like to know!