EHR BUYER'S GUIDE FOR NEPHROLOGISTS

An Insider's Guide to Purchasing
Nephrology-Specific EHR and Billing Software

Introduction

> With nephrologists experiencing some of the highest percentages of physician burnout, utilizing a nephrology-specific EHR may not only be important to your practice's workflow but also for your providers' overall well-being.

Recent healthcare provider surveys revealed that electronic health record (EHR) solutions received an average grade of "F" on the usability scale... YIKES!

With physicians spending as much as two hours in their EHR for every one hour spent with a patient, it's no wonder surveys have also found a strong correlation between EHR usability and the odds of physician burnout—especially among nephrologists. Implementing a nephrology-specific EHR is important not only for your practice's workflow but also for your providers' overall well-being.

If you are in the market for a new, nephrology-specific EHR and/or medical billing software, you've probably realized it can be difficult to know which solution will work best for your practice. If you've been researching solutions, you might already have a condition we like to call "vendor blur," where all the vendors start to look alike with their similar messaging, products, and services.

We want to be part of improving the average usability scale grade for nephrology-specific solutions and reducing nephrologist burnout rates. This guide will provide tips and insight to help you narrow down your options to the best nephrology-specific vendors, and to make a purchase that will satisfy the needs of your practice.

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Tools to Improve Patient Engagement

Today, patients expect timely, secure, and convenient mobile communication where they live and work. As a nephrologist, you can provide better patient engagement through a strong and capable EHR solution. Your vendor will be able to support your team's efforts to keep patients and staff engaged from virtually anywhere.

Digitizing the patient experience through EHR, Billing, Scheduling, Telehealth, and other solutions can help improve patient communication while transforming clinical care and the patient-provider relationship.

When you combine the powers of analytics and automation with artificial intelligence, your practice could not only boost patient engagement, but also automate labor-intensive administrative duties, access critical patient insights, and improve practice performance overall.

Here are some healthtech tools that enhance patient engagement—be sure to ask potential vendors if these are a part of their solution.

Front Office Self-Scheduler

Digitize all inbound patient inquiries to your practice by providing an automated way to request appointments and prescription refills and to send images, videos, and interactive responses.

Digital Intake

Automate the check-in process and reduce patient wait times before their scheduled appointment with an intelligent intake tool that offers patients a way to complete their intake forms digitally from anywhere.

Virtual Queue Management

Eliminate crowded waiting rooms by creating a virtual environment that allows your practice to manage patient flow, enhance the appointment process, and keep patients safe by following social-distancing guidelines.

Patient Portal

Introduce a convenient, user-friendly platform where patients can review statements, pay their bills online, chat directly with their provider, access medical records, request appointments, and receive reminders.

Care Coordination

Deliver enhanced patient-centered solutions and improve health outcomes for patients managing one or more chronic conditions with 24/7 care coordination through monthly telephone checkups.

Telehealth

Expand your practice's reach with virtual telehealth visits, locate pharmacies near your patients' locations with geo-based targeting, send text notifications of upcoming virtual appointments, and reduce risk of COVID-19 exposure for both patients and staff.

Ease of Research & Transparency

A vital step in choosing new EHR and billing software is getting detailed information from potential vendors about their company, products, and services.

Research

When considering a solution, be sure you can answer the following questions:

- **How does the system work?**
- **What services does it provide that you need?**
- **How much will it cost—initially, monthly, and in the long term.**
- **Who will handle installation, onboarding, and ongoing support? Does it satisfy your nephrology practice's needs and make things easier?**

Transparency

It's not unreasonable for you to ask that vendors be candid about how their company will satisfy your needs and how much their solutions cost from start to finish. Nobody wants to be forced into a sales conversation before they are ready. That's why we believe EHR software vendors should simplify the purchasing process and be 100% transparent from step one.

Checklist: Things EHR vendors can provide to make your research easier:

✓ Demo Video Library

Your prospective vendor should ideally provide you with a library of demo videos that show all facets of their product. Even better, you should have access to this library 24/7 so you can watch the videos when it's convenient for you. Note—videos that provide an overview of the vendor are nice, but you need to see the ins and outs of the product too (including the nephrology-specific features you would use daily).

✓ A Detailed List of Product Features

You can only understand how a product will fit into your unique practice workflow once you see all its features. The most transparent companies will have an option to "see all features" or "review features" from their website. Look for screenshots and descriptions to learn more about how everything works.

✓ A List of Supported Specialties

Ask each vendor how their product could support your unique nephrology workflow. Every EHR and billing software solution is different: some support a few specialties; others can support them all. Make sure to review the specialty-specific templates that your nephrology practice would be using and ask about creating custom templates if what you see doesn't include everything you need.

✓ Transparent Pricing & Packaging Options

Having access to a vendor's pricing and packaging options will help you know what questions to ask to avoid financial surprises. Get this information up front—it is not fair or reasonable for a vendor to expect a practice to sit through a one-hour demonstration before getting to their pricing and packaging. Make sure you understand all the associated expenses, including setup fees and any potential hidden costs.

How the Systems Interface

> **True All-in-One Systems don't require multiple logins and passwords.**

Most vendors claim to have an all-in-one system. However, since there is no one definition or list of criteria for "all-in-one systems," the descriptor isn't as helpful as it first looks. Let's define the term in a way that will help you assess whether a product truly has what you're looking for.

One of the main reasons to prioritize having an all-in-one system for your practice is convenience. Another is avoiding the data issues that can arise in integrations between multiple companies' products.

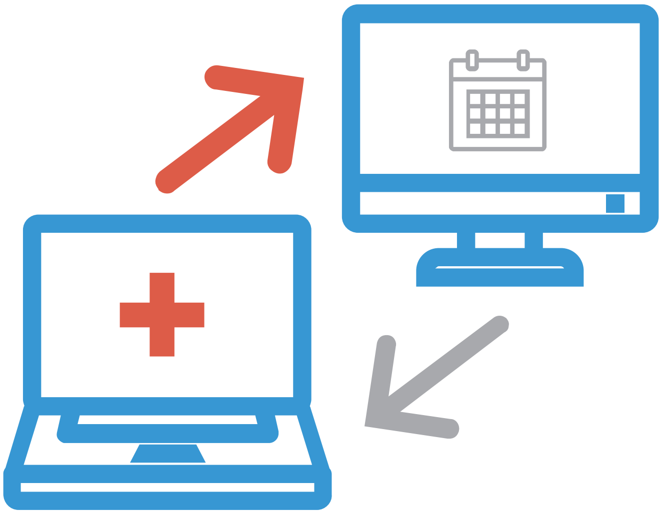
True All-in-One

True all-in-one systems don't require multiple logins and passwords. They allow you to chart your visits in an EHR, manage claims from billing software, and even submit e-claims to a clearinghouse electronically. Data never has to be reentered or updated in multiple places. These systems are the most convenient, efficient, and secure way to go—and they have fewer opportunities for human error.

Vendor-to-Vendor Data Integrations

One popular emerging healthcare technology trend is to build data integrations between EHR and other software owned by separate vendors. If you're also already using a Billing Software program, it makes sense to just build an interface with an Electronic Health Records System, right? Not so fast. Integration introduces risks including revenue loss, sensitive data vulnerabilities, and more.

> **all-in-one system, noun**
> a software solution for medical practices that includes electronic health records, billing software, and insurance clearinghouse all from a single login



Top Risks of Bridging Separate EHR & Billing Systems

1) Revenue Losses

Interfaced systems rarely offer features such as appointment-to-claims reconciliation to make sure every appointment gets billed. It's not a surprise these systems don't offer such advanced features because, after all, they weren't designed to work together. Without such features, practices can experience revenue losses, something that modern, budget-conscious practices simply cannot afford.

2) Data Loss

One of the biggest risks of bridging different EHR and billing software solutions is that data can "fall between the cracks" and get lost. This can result in important information missing from a patient's chart, or lead to revenue loss when superbills or claims never make it out of the EHR and into the billing software to be submitted.

3) Inefficiency Through Poor Design

If you're using separate EHR and billing software programs that are bridged together, you could experience design conflicts that create frustrating user experiences for your staff. While each interface is different, there are always limitations with what data flows back and forth between the systems. For example, one customer explained that they were using a data integration where patients had to be entered using the EHR, but the EHR didn't allow the practice to run an insurance eligibility verification. To do so, they had to hand-key the patient demographics into the Billing Software program, which defeated the purpose of an "integrated" system.

4) The 'Runaround'

No software is perfect, and the time will come when your system stops performing as intended. When you're using EHR and billing software designed by separate vendors, there is a chance that one vendor could point to the other as the problem. Your team has many more important things to do than deal with the runaround.

5) EHR to Billing Integrations with a Single Vendor

The majority of Integrated EHR and Billing Software systems contain at least one system that was acquired from a separate company. The challenge with these interfaces is that while they're owned by a single company, the user experience is often similar to a vendor-to-vendor data integration because the systems were not originally created to work together. You'll know you're using two separate systems from a single vendor if you have two separate logins for your EHR and Billing Software systems.

4 Questions to Ask Potential Vendors About Data Bridges

1) How do your two systems reconcile appointments versus claims to make sure no claims go unbilled?

NephroChoice is a single, integrated system that ensures that appointment data and billing data are always in sync. The application has a built-in tracking system to ensure that every appointment on the calendar has a corresponding claim and note for that visit.

2) What type of security do you have in place to ensure our data won't be hacked?

NephroChoice deploys high security standards at all levels of the application to ensure data is safe. Our servers reside in a Tier 1 Data Center that is SOCII compliant, and data is encrypted both at rest and in transit. Additionally, we have a team of full-time security experts and technology that monitor the application 24/7.

3) Is there an audit report to make sure every appointment becomes a claim and every SOAP Note gets billed out?

Yes, NephroChoice has management-level reports to ensure the most critical events take place. These reports will even identify which users are responsible for the outstanding tasks.

4) If there's a problem with the data interface, who should my practice call? If we get the runaround, who can we escalate our phone calls to?

You should first reach out to the iSalus Healthcare support team for any issues. Our team is skilled in identifying where issues may exist. If we believe the issue is outside of our application, we will work with you and the vendor directly to troubleshoot.

Does the Software Support Nephrology Practices?

EHR and billing software companies can have vastly different client bases. Some companies support only specific specialties, while others support all specialties. While conducting your research, make a short list for yourself of the nephrology-specific challenges your practice faces to make sure the vendor has a good solution for those issues.

Here are some key features of what nephrology-specific support would be important from a potential vendor:

- Advanced Dialysis Tracking that allows Nephrologists to track patient rounds list and visit level, and will act as a reminder to complete the required comprehensive visit monthly
- Comprehensive Dialysis Reporting that identifies patients who have met the four-visit threshold to deliver the most efficient patient care
- Custom templates that improve your workflow whether you're conducting an initial consult exam, treating kidney stones, or performing another nephrology procedure
- A patient portal that grants your patients 24-hour access to their personal health information and allows them to track their vitals, see their test results, send HIPAA-compliant messages to your practice, schedule appointments, make payments, and complete digital intake forms
- A mobile app that allows busy nephrologists to stay connected to your EHR and key patient information from anywhere, at any time, on their smartphone

We recommend you search each vendor's website to learn whether they support nephrology specifically. If that information is not available online, ask your sales contact to share screenshots of specialty-specific features, templates, workflow explanations, and other information about how they support your specialty.

Client-Server vs. The Cloud

Technology has come a long way in the past decade, so there are more and more EHR systems available via the internet. However, it's important for your nephrology practice to decide whether a client-server system or a cloud-based system better meets your needs. In the table below, there's a pro/cons list for client-server and cloud-based technology, followed by a list of questions you can ask the vendor to better understand your hosting options.

	Client-Server	Cloud
Setup Fees	High	Low
Financial Risks	High	Low
Equipment Fees	High	Low to None
Configurability	High	Depends on Vendor
Usability	Low	High
Mobility	Low	High
Reliability	Medium	High
Control	High	Low
Innovation	Low	High
Upgrade Fees	Medium to High	None

Questions to Ask Server-Based Vendors:

Can you host our data in a data center?

If you can host our data, what are the associated fees?

How are data backups conducted on your system?

What equipment is necessary to conduct a data backup and how much additional server space will you need to do so?

How often will we need new servers?

What are the setup costs to get the system operational?

Questions to Ask Cloud-Based Vendors:

Was your system designed to run over the internet?*

What browsers does your system run on?

Is your system mobile friendly?

What security protocol does your system use?

Is there a separate hosing or maintenance fee?

How often do you do data backups?

What type of security does your data center have to protect your information?

Have you ever had a data breach? If so, how did you follow up with your clients?

What can we do if the internet goes down?**

*If the answer to this is yes, the system should run on an internet browser such as Internet Explorer, not a Citrix Connection, or Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) connection.

**Most cell phones can be used as a mobile Wi-Fi hotspot, which can be a good backup in case of internet outages.

Mobile-Friendly Software

Running a nephrology practice is a lot of work. But having a life outside of work is important too. When you choose a vendor that offers you the ability to take care of business on the go and deliver patient care from anywhere, you gain freedom and flexibility. Do note that most EHR vendors don't include access to every feature in their system via their mobile platforms, so provider adoption isn't as high as it could be.

Good medical office software will allow you to do the following from a mobile device:

- Send secure inter-office communication
- Review chart notes
- Create tasks and reminders
- Review your practice's financial performance
- Dictate notes to the EHR
- Review and schedule appointments
- Write e-prescriptions
- Take and upload pictures
- Capture charges and receive charge capture alerts reminding you to submit superbills

Ask your prospective EHR vendor about any additional costs for a mobile EHR and what mobile platforms and devices their mobile EHR can run on. Most vendors have iOS and Android support. The key is to make sure the features available in the mobile EHR add convenience to your professional life, so you can spend more time with family and less time tethered to your office.

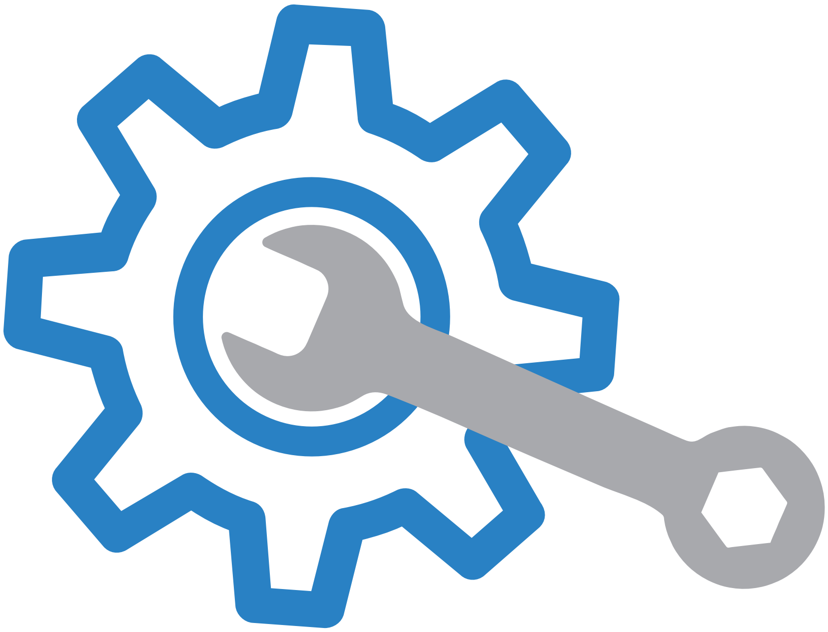
Customization

According to recent surveys, EHR customizations are responsible for many cost overruns during installation. Every nephrology practice is unique, and it's important to find a vendor that will fit their EHR to your needs, not the other way around.

The following are questions you'll want to ask the EHR vendor to make sure you have a clear understanding of how well they can customize their program, and how much it costs:

- Do you have templates specifically for nephrologists?
- If so, could you please send me several so I can review them?
- What are your setup fees?
- How much customization is included with the setup fees?
- How much do you charge for additional customization?
- Can I pay by the hour instead of paying for large blocks?
- Will I receive written documentation of the tasks and costs involved?

Before agreeing to any customizations, always ask for an estimate in writing that contains the cost and the estimated time to complete the customizations. You'll also want to ask what specifically will be included in the customizations and what recompense will be made if the vendor misses their deadline.



Implementation & Training

Implementation and training, also known as onboarding, is a critical element to consider. Without adequate onboarding support, your nephrology practice may not be able to successfully complete your system implementation.

> Few, if any, vendors can import financials and A/R from your previous billing program.

Below, we've broken down three core areas of onboarding: data imports, training, and clearinghouse enrollments. Each section offers important questions to ask your prospective vendors.

Data Imports

One of the first things you'll need to address before switching to a new vendor is what resources they have available to help you get your current data into their system. Most EHR and Medical Billing Software companies can help you import patient demographics, appointments, payer lists, fee schedules, and clinical data. But few, if any, vendors can import financials and A/R from your previous billing program. Include questions like these when you talk to a vendor about data imports:

- What records can you import?
- What type of file format do you need to import the data?
- Can you help me get my data out of my current system?
- How much will it cost to do the import?
- Are there any hidden or additional costs?
- Is there a chance it will cost more than we initially agreed?
- How long will it take to complete the import?
- If you run behind, will I receive a refund?
- What steps do you take to ensure the data import was done properly?

Training

Training in your new system is critical to your nephrology practice's successful adoption of it. Make sure the vendor clearly communicates how they handle training. These days, most companies train entirely remotely—keeping onboarding convenient and low-cost. Here are some questions to ask about the training process:

- Will I have a personal contact during training?
- How long will this person be assigned to our account?
- Once that person is no longer our point of contact, how will we get customer service?
- How long does training typically take?
- How is training conducted? Online or in-person?
- Is there an in-person option if we elect to pay extra?
- If so, how much does it cost?
- If you do web-based training, do you record it so we can reference it later?
- Are there training videos we can access during off-hours?
- What do we need to do prior to the training sessions to be ready for training?

Clearinghouse Enrollment

Enrolling with a new clearinghouse can be a very time-consuming process, and it's vital that you don't miss anything. The consequences of missing a step or entering information incorrectly can hurt your cash flow.

Some vendors offer what is referred to as Assisted Clearinghouse Enrollment. This can be incredibly helpful because it means that an expert is responsible for getting the agreements to your nephrology practice, and all you need to do is sign the paperwork.

Customer Support

Customer service is one of the most important aspects of any software system, and many nephrologists complain about the support they receive from EHR and medical billing software companies.

Below, you'll find a few questions you'll want to make sure you ask your new vendor to gain an understanding of how they take care of their customers:

- Where are your customer service centers located?
- What are your hours of operation for customer service?
- What support resources does your company offer online?
- What is the average call hold time for your support team?
- What is your customer retention level?
- What steps do we follow to contact customer support? What if we're facing an emergency?
- What happens if I submit a support ticket with no response?

Size of the Company

There's no right or wrong answer when it comes to vendor company size—what matters is that they provide the best service for your practice.

There are pros and cons to working with a healthcare technology vendor of any size. Some nephrology practices believe that selecting a large and established vendor is best for them because it feels like a safer bet; other practices prefer to work with a smaller company that they feel has a better understanding of their business. There's no right or wrong answer when it comes to vendor company size —**what matters is that they provide the best service for your practice**. The size of the vendor you're considering doesn't necessarily determine the quality of the product and the customer service you would receive from them.

Below are a few questions you might ask your vendor to help you decide how important their size is:

- **Is your company privately held, or public?**
- **Is your company profitable?**
- **Does your company have investors or plan on selling the business? If so, what would happen to our partnership?**
- **How many medical providers do you currently support?**
- **Can we talk to your CEO? (This will give you a sense of the size of the company and how important your business would be to them.)**

Get Started with EHR and Billing Software Built for Nephrology

With nephrologist burnout rates so high, something's got to give—and it starts with your EHR and billing software. In fact, physicians feel strongly that too many bureaucratic tasks **(58%)**, too much time at work **(37%)**, and the increased computerization of their practices **(28%)** are contributing in a big way to their burnout.

Now is the time to choose an all-in-one EHR and medical billing software that can help ensure positive physician well-being, the delivery of better patient care, and so much more. If you're ready to learn how NephroChoice can help, let's talk.

Schedule a Demo

"NephroChoice helps us provide better care and more efficient care. It helped organize dialysis rounds and replaced spreadsheets, and got billing out the door quicker."

- NephroChoice Customer

Why Work With NephroChoice™?

Now that you know what you're looking for in a nephrology-specific EHR and medical billing solution, it's time to choose the right software. Custom built for high-performing nephrologists, NephroChoice delivers fully integrated practice management, EHR, medical billing, and telehealth software so you can spend more time on what matters most: delivering excellent patient care and ensuring physician well-being.

Here's how NephroChoice checks off all the boxes in the hunt for the right nephrology-specific EHR and billing solution:

- **Transparent:** No matter what questions you have about NephroChoice, you can find everything you want to know on our website or by contacting us. Explore our website and see tech specs, schedule a demo, read our FAQs, and more.
- **Fully integrated:** NephroChoice offers a true all-in-one practice management, EHR, billing, telehealth, and patient engagement solution that was thoughtfully designed just for nephrology practices. NephroChoice is also fully integrated with labs so patients have instant access to their test and lab results.
- **Easy to use:** Our system is designed to maximize efficiency so you can deliver end-to-end patient care with a cloud-based system and a single login for all of your practice needs. We're proud of how easy our system is to use. How much will it cost to do the import?
- **Mobile-friendly:** Our mobile app lets you work from virtually anywhere. With real-time access, NephroChoice lets you capture and upload images, send HIPAA-compliant messages, schedule appointments, access patient health records, and more.
- **Customizable:** NephroChoice offers workflow templates built just for nephrologists. It also includes workflow customization so you can ensure that your practice's specific needs are met.
- **Onboarding:** When onboarding new customers, our process includes data conversions, database/feature setup, template customizations, software training, and more. Additionally, we created our very own University to help you learn everything you need to know about using NephroChoice.
- **Support:** Our U.S.-based support team is highly responsive and backed up by our powerful Support Portal. With 24/7 monitoring and management, we are constantly monitoring data to ensure zero downtime for your nephrology practice.

We understand the intricacies of nephrology practices, and we've configured NephroChoice to meet your specific needs. We also offer additional solutions and services to help you bring in more revenue and grow your practice.

Your Workday Just Got Easier, with NephroChoice

We understand the intricacies of nephrology practices, and we've configured NephroChoice to meet your specific needs. We also offer nephrology-specific solutions and services to help you bring in more revenue and grow your practice.

NephroChoice Key Features:

- **Patient Timeline + Interactive Patient Summary:** Our award-winning patient timeline gives you a snapshot of your patient's history all in one spot, while our patient summary feature allows you to quickly view vitals, meds, lab results, and more, all on a single screen.
- **Intelligent Intake Forms:** Decrease patient wait times, reduce data processing errors, lessen the load on front office staff, and increase overall efficiency with our online automated patient intake forms.
- **Customized Order Sets + Documentation:** From initial consult to diagnosis, enjoy templates and custom order sets made to fit the documentation and in-house or outsourced order needs of each provider in your practice.
- **Dialysis Rounding & Tracking:** Track patient rounds lists and visit levels, and be automatically reminded to complete the monthly comprehensive visit.
- **Efficient Scheduler:** With our award-winning, feature-rich scheduler, you can color code appointments and increase efficiency.
- **Mobile App:** Our powerful app grants you secure access to all patient charts from anywhere with an internet connection.
- **Telehealth:** AnywhereCare allows you to offer fully integrated telehealth visits for patients who need access to more convenient care.
- **Patient Portal:** Give patients instant, 24-hour access to their personal health information, appointment requests, and online bill management form anywhere with MyMedicalLocker, a secure patient portal app.
- **CCM Services:** Patients with multiple chronic conditions can now better manage their health and achieve a higher quality of personal care with the help of our Chronic Care Management Services team.
- **Dialysis Billing + Batch Eligibility:** Save time and increase efficiency. Create dialysis claims en masse, offer flexible credit card payment options, and run eligibility checks in bulk over practice-defined needs.

Nephrology practices love working with NephroChoice for more reasons than our incredible software. It's more than the additional products and services we offer too. It's about working together as a team to collaboratively engage your patients.