

## **Evaluation of the Electronic Health Records Demonstration**

### **Summary**

CMS contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) to conduct an eight-year independent evaluation of the Electronic Health Records (EHR) demonstration. The evaluation will assess the degree to which the demonstration met the goals of improved quality of care and reduced Medicare costs through the adoption and use of EHRs in small to medium sized primary care practices. MPR will report the evaluation findings to CMS within one year after the end of the demonstration.

The practices in the treatment group will receive financial incentives for using minimum core EHR functionalities in each of the five demonstration years. In addition, they will receive incentives for reporting quality measures in the second year of the demonstration and for meeting quality performance targets in the third through fifth years of the demonstration. The intervention includes an additional incentive for use of additional EHR functions. Control group practices will not receive any financial incentives. The evaluation will rely on a randomized control-group design to estimate the impacts of the intervention on key outcomes. Before randomization, all eligible practices will be stratified within site on selected criteria such as practice size, experience with EHRs, and urban/rural location, to ensure balanced representation of treatment and control group practices along these characteristics.

The evaluation will use data from a variety of sources, including Medicare claims and beneficiary, provider, and office systems surveys. Based on these data, the evaluation will assess impacts on EHR use, use of Medicare-covered services and costs, quality of care, health outcomes, care continuity, patient satisfaction with care, and provider satisfaction. The evaluation will also use the office systems survey data to explore the association between care quality and using more advanced EHR functions (beyond the minimum core functionalities) over time within the treatment group. In addition, the evaluation will rely on practice contacts to examine practices' experience in implementing and using EHRs, identify barriers and facilitators to EHR use, and providers' perceptions of the effects of the demonstration on their practice and patients. Finally, the evaluation will explore which market-area and practice characteristics are associated with improved outcomes.