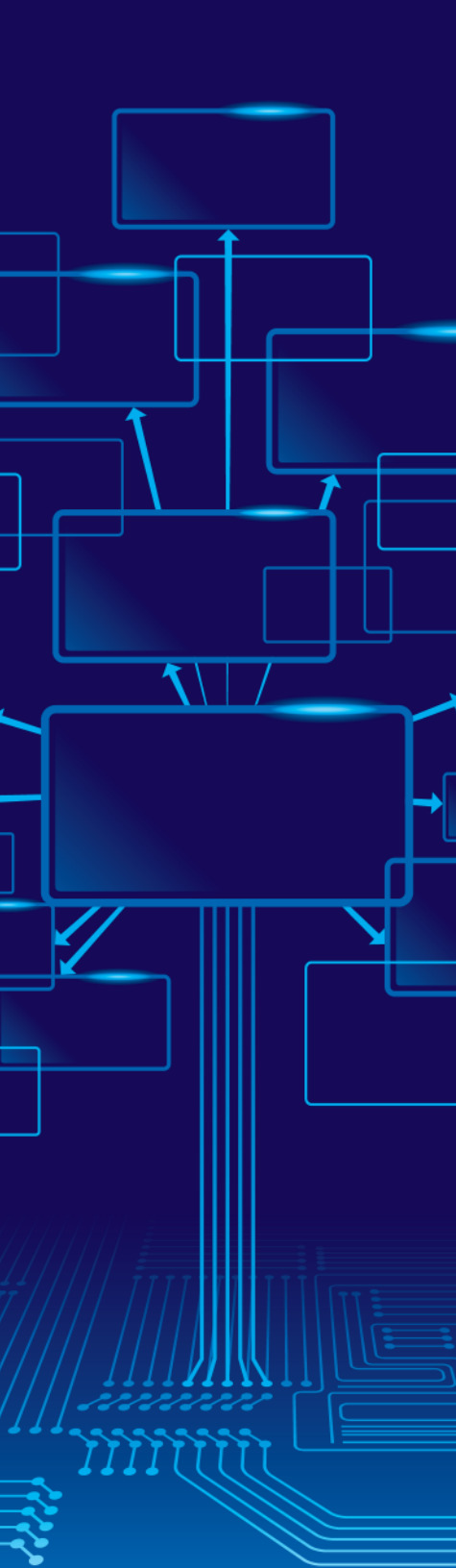




Behavioral Health Orgs Look to EHR Vendors for Integration

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As providers seek to advance patient-centered care, many behavioral health organizations are turning to their EHR vendors to support integrated care models, according to a KLAS report.

Behavioral health has historically been treated separately from primary care despite many behavioral health patients having comorbidities that require primary care.

However, the vast majority of behavioral health organizations interviewed said they either deliver some integrated care (57%) or plan to do so in the future (19%).

Still, the report authors noted there is a wide range of what an organization might consider integrated care -- from sharing referrals with a primary care office to having both primary care and behavioral health staff onsite.

Therefore, many organizations provide one or two elements of integrated care but do not provide truly integrated care, which would mean using a single EHR for behavioral health and primary care.

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Hurdles to integrated care

Behavioral health organizations reported two main barriers to integrated care: acquiring an additional documentation tool for primary care and achieving integration with a billing solution.

Most respondents said they are investing in EHR and billing solutions to help overcome these hurdles and are looking to their current EHR vendor to provide the necessary tools.

However, customers generally reported that vendors struggle to some degree to meet their functionality and integration needs.

Epic and NextGen Healthcare customers highlighted integration between behavioral health, primary care and revenue cycle platforms. Respondents also cited possible integration with various third-party applications.

Qualifacts and Netsmart offer modules for both behavioral health and primary care. Respondents noted integration challenges surrounding cost, speed and syncing with third-party tools.

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Across vendors, many interviewed organizations still need to use third-party tools such as telehealth, patient engagement and remote patient monitoring tools to support integrated care strategies.

Telehealth and reporting tools popular for integrated care

Some behavioral health organizations are using third-party technology to fill gaps in their integrated care strategies. Respondents who consider non-EHR tools most often seek telehealth platforms and analytics solutions that provide reporting and screening capabilities.

Telehealth is one of the easiest ways for behavioral health organizations to implement integrated care, as it allows patients to connect with clinicians for basic services that don't involve in-person consultations. In particular, some respondents reported ease of implementation with Microsoft Teams or Doxy.me as telehealth tools.

Solutions for reporting and screening can also support organizations' integrated care needs by aiding in quality/regulatory reporting. Respondents using a reporting/screening solution most often noted using Azara Healthcare and said the population health tool helps them gain federal funding for integrated care.

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Other solution types that can help organizations provide integrated care include point-of-care dictation solutions, pharmacy solutions, billing solutions and integration tools, the report authors said.

Hannah Nelson has been covering news related to health information technology and health data interoperability since 2020.