

## Preface

THE ADVENT OF computers in medicine has been—for many providers—culturally jarring, politically difficult, and certainly expensive. While a number of factors have played a role in this current change, the original impetus was the understandable desire for better patient care. This desire evolved into the belief that we might not only improve patient care but also perhaps do so at a lower cost than has been the case. Over the past two decades, there has been a push to prevent avoidable medical errors and to lower the cost of care, and it has been strongly suggested that computers might help us accomplish these goals. Added to these goals is the need to meet the growing regulatory requirements of healthcare, especially since the advent of “meaningful use” criteria. The result is that almost all American—and most global—hospitals are transitioning from paper records to electronic health records (EHRs).

The Association of Medical Directors of Information Systems noted in its *Informatics Review* journal that the nationwide EHR implementation price tag is estimated at \$150 billion over the coming eight years. Projections call for hospitals to spend \$46 billion to acquire and expand their current EHR systems and another \$55 billion in new operating costs. In every hospital, these costs have become a significant part of the annual budget. Projecting future costs and anticipating future regulatory hurdles are major goals of hospital leadership.

Our purpose is to make the transition easier and clearer. The experiences of the thousands of hospitals that have made this transition are universal; they share many of the same problems and

develop many of the same solutions. Drawing from the stories of the hundreds of hospitals we have worked with, we describe how hospitals deal with new hardware and software; organize their governance; deal with their clinical staff; and manage their formularies, order sets, and documentation in the changing electronic world. The successes and failures, the right ways and wrong ways, the intuitive ways and the difficult ways of implementing a hospital EHR are not new; each hospital has—often by hit and miss—carved a unique path into the electronic world. This book offers insight into the pitfalls, problems, and peculiarities that occur along the way.

Our aim is not only to help you improve patient care—as well as help lower costs and meet regulatory goals—but also to ensure that you do so without the difficulties that others have had. Throughout, our advice is drawn from extensive experience; we hope that you can avoid some of our experiences and profit from the rest of them. Healthcare is in the midst of unparalleled change; we offer you a detailed view of that change and a map of how to survive it. Our strongest wish is to have all of us deliver not only different care, but better care.