



Epic's 2009 Release – Enhancement Considerations

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With each new release/upgrade, the Epic team has the opportunity to add enhancements to their current functionality. While each healthcare system has the option of installing the upgrade without tackling any of the enhancements, the usual course is for the Epic team (clinicians, analysts, and builders) to review all available enhancements and changes, decide which are most beneficial to current workflows, prioritize these enhancements based on workflow needs, and finally complete the associated build necessary for implementation.

Epic's latest, the Summer 2009 upgrade, changes the look and feel of Hyperspace without any of the enhancements. This release also provides a number of improvements that will optimize workflows, contribute to efficiency, and provide solutions for issues related to regulatory compliance.

The EpicCare Inpatient Executive Summary (IES) for the 2009 release provides a high-level overview of the most noteworthy changes and includes the impact of each change as it relates to patient care, productivity, profitability, and regulatory compliance. In addition, IES reports information both for each change that relates to any prerequisites needed for the enhancement to work as described, as well as for the implementation impact related to the level of analysis, validation, research, build, configuration, and associated testing required. Finally, the training impact for end users is addressed.

Unlike prior releases, many of the enhancements available with the Summer 2009 release involve integration across multiple Epic applications. In addition to the integration needs, analysis of current build is required for many of the improvements regardless of the application. For example, to set up conditional orders, the Epic team needs to create BestPractice Advisories, set order transmittal rules, configure buttons and columns in the Order Review activity, and designate where the system evaluates conditional order values, such as in flowsheet rows. Moreover, analysis of the current order build is necessary to determine which orders should be conditional. Once this is accomplished, the conditions for order initiation must be defined. This requires additional time and analysis of not only current build, but also analysis and updates to already existing practice policies, procedures, and guidelines by operational and clinical groups who will need to sign off on the proposed changes prior to beginning the associated build. Once the decisions have been made and the build completed, test scripts will be needed for each of the conditional orders, as many different configurations are possible.

Another enhancement that requires pre-build decision-making that crosses multiple Epic applications relates to just inpatient and provides improvements in the documentation options for infusion administration. These options not only help the associated documentation workflows, but also assist in meeting the reimbursement requirements established by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). These documentation improvements include the following:

- Additional types of medications can be specified as infusions in the MAR.
- Users are able to document infusion-related actions for medications that are not considered infusions.
- Overdue documentation for infusions can be configured.
- Nurses have the ability to view all infusions on a single MAR tab.
- Infusions for patients who are not admitted to the hospital (Hospital Outpatient Departments, for example) now require documentation with a "Stopped" action in order to be considered complete and to no longer appear on the MAR. A system configuration capability exists that can require a "Stopped" action to complete an infusion for a current inpatient. This workflow allows the nurse to document when the infusion was stopped which is a requirement for Medicare reimbursement.
- The nurse can now document the infusion as "Paused."

- Users can be prevented from closing an encounter or printing an After Visit Summary (AVS) if the documentation contains running infusions. A new print group that includes all currently running infusions is available to the nurse for review and for accessing the MAR to complete the required documentation.
- A new print group for billing coders is available that assists in determining the appropriate code to charge for an infusion.

This list makes it quite evident that an integrated approach involving multiple application teams will be necessary to complete the analysis and associated build necessary for implementation of this enhancement.

Prior to initiating any of the associated build related to this enhancement, a number of decisions need to be made which include the following:

- Which medications will appear as infusions?
- Which medication will be configured to use specific MAR actions?
- How should users be notified of overdue infusion documentation?
- Should nurses document an action of “Stopped” to complete a medication/infusion?
- Should clinicians be prevented from closing an encounter or printing an After Visit Summary if the current documentation indicates running infusions?

In reviewing the steps and decisions required for this one enhancement, it becomes apparent that analysis and decision-making is necessary across multiple applications before any build commences. Cross-application integration and infusion administration have been discussed here, but it is important to note that analysis and decisions are necessary for each enhancement considered. This process will add necessary time to the implementation process and project teams should be aware of this when considering the 2009 release/upgrade and deciding which enhancements to implement at the time of the upgrade. This protracted, necessary analysis and decision-making process may possibly require further resources in order to meet aggressive implementation guidelines. In addition, the development of integrated comprehensive testing scripts will also be critical to implementation success.

In summary, Epic’s 2009 upgrade changes the look and feel of Hyperspace without implementing any of the enhancements. Many of the enhancements available with the 2009 release involve integration across multiple Epic applications. In addition to careful consideration with respect to integration needs, a deep understanding and analysis of current build is required, as well as direction from Epic's Technical Support when upgrading to a specific enhancement, such as infusion administration.

If you would like more information VCS can help. Please contact us at 610.444.1233 or vcs@getvitalized.com. Additional information resides on our website, www.getvitalized.com.