



5 Ways APIs Are a Game-Changer for EHR and HIT Vendors

Empower Your Customers to Move Information Between Disconnected Systems

Healthcare has been slow to embrace technology standards, so we've failed to realize their full potential. Unfortunately, this has resulted in variation that causes healthcare data to get stuck in "silos" where it is inaccessible to other systems.

Now, the 21st Century Cures Act is working to change that. The act and the related ONC Cures Act Final Rule establish certification criteria that require covered electronic health record (EHR) and healthcare IT systems to use an application programming interface (API) in the HL7 Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR) format. The push toward API readiness aims to boost innovation by fostering a new ecosystem of healthcare applications and clears the way for electronic health information to move fluidly between disconnected systems. This enables patients to access their medical information, and providers to share health records for better care collaboration.

It's Time to Embrace APIs

For healthcare providers, time is precious. It's vital that their time is focused more on patient care than on capturing data across multiple applications. APIs make it easy for data to be easily exchanged between systems and EHRs to avoid duplicate entry of data and improve efficiency for providers. Having the latest APIs tightly integrated in your EHR or health information network is a game-changer for your customers and your business. Here are five ways to embrace APIs and empower healthcare providers:

- 1. Make health records accessible**—Patients are demanding access to their own medical information. That's no surprise, given the convoluted process that's often involved in gathering health records and sharing them with a team of primary and specialty providers. Need to feed your EHR and patient portal with clinical data? Modular APIs pull the necessary information into your system and transmit it further downstream to interconnected systems only when that data is necessary. This keeps patients engaged in their care and puts providers in a good position to make better clinical decisions.



"Our DrFirst integration is a great value add to our care management platform. Welkin supports innovative healthcare programs, and a piece of that puzzle for many of our clients is having a trusted medication management system. Our built-in integration makes the prescribing process straightforward so our providers can provide streamlined, quality care."

—Michelle Pampin, CEO, Welkin Health

2.

Make pricing transparent—It's a given in every other industry: People want to know the cost of a product or service before they buy. Unfortunately, in healthcare it's not unusual for patients to be in the dark about the cost of their care until months after a procedure or test has taken place, or until they show up at the pharmacy to pick up a prescription. Thanks to new Information Blocking and Price Transparency Rules, healthcare providers must let patients know in advance how much their care is going to cost. APIs can give providers visibility into patient-specific benefits information during a patient encounter so they can see out-of-pocket costs and counsel patients on therapy and pharmacy alternatives. This creates an opportunity to share decision-making, which can increase patient adherence to recommended treatments. APIs make this possible in the e-prescribing workflow so providers can discuss pricing with patients at the point of care, thereby increasing the chances of medication adherence.



What's an API?

Hint: It's not the tasty starter plate served before your entrée.

An application programming interface (API) is a small software component that serves as an interface to enable two applications to "talk to" one another. The benefit lies not only in the ability to share data across systems but also the ease and speed with which that data is served up to users. It also saves a huge amount of time by taking away the burden of double entry of data in two systems.

But APIs are nothing new. Industries as diverse as travel and finance have been using them for decades to share data and create seamless customer experiences. In fact, every time you book a flight on a travel website or pay a bill with online banking,

you're likely using this behind-the-scenes technology.

Now healthcare is solving its interoperability problem with APIs that make it possible for electronic health record (EHR) systems to share patient data with incompatible systems. Because APIs are based on standards and use compatible formats, they can access information from various EHRs without having to know how those systems store their data.

The result: Healthcare providers get a simple way to share information securely and efficiently, and patients get quick, digital access to their own medical records.

3.

Check prior authorization requirements—The mystery of when prior authorization is required and the manual process of requesting it can be complex and time-consuming for providers. With an API integrated in the e-prescribing workflow, providers are notified automatically when authorization is needed. They can then select an alternate medication or submit the request electronically, directly within the EHR. With electronic prior authorization (ePA) mandates in effect or pending in many states, this not only saves time and hassle for providers but brings payers into compliance as well.

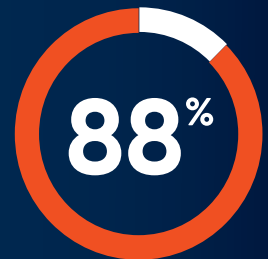
4.

Support value-based care initiatives—As the industry shifts focus to healthcare rather than sick care, EHR and health IT vendors can play a vital role. When clinical data is easily accessible and usable at the point of care, providers don't have to spend time searching, collecting, validating, and documenting information to get complete patient records. One way APIs help is by enabling medication history information to be imported automatically into the EHR, with artificial intelligence preserving the integrity of the data as it is shared across different systems. This includes prescription fill information, which is vital for population health initiatives that track medication adherence for high-risk patients, such as those with congestive heart failure or diabetes, allowing care managers to intervene quickly to get patients back on track.

TECHVALIDATE SURVEY OF DRFIRST PARTNERS*



3/4 said APIs reduced their development burden.



said integrations improved regulatory compliance and quality measures.

*2021 third-party partner survey by TechValidate



"Overall, DrFirst has provided us with a robust solution that [behavioral healthcare] providers like. The highest compliment for an e-prescribing solution is that the IT staff does not hear complaints from doctors, and DrFirst has broadly achieved that."

—Alex Atkinson, Integration Manager, Foothold Technology

- 5. Help providers comply with evolving regulations**—It's not easy to stay on top of ever-changing mandates. By using APIs to keep electronic health information flowing smoothly, your platforms—and the providers who depend on them—can comply with new Information Blocking regulations. Seamless integration of APIs from a third-party vendor also removes the burden from your development teams, while keeping your platform up-to-date and competitive.

Are You API-Ready?

Your customers want better access to clinical data, and they need ways to stay compliant with new information-sharing rules. If you aren't taking advantage of APIs to differentiate your platform, empower providers with real-time information, and help them stay ahead of evolving regulations, you could fall behind.

DrFirst partners with over 300 EHRs to integrate our e-prescribing platform—including for controlled substances (EPCS), prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMP), and other core requirements and functions—so your team can focus on strategic initiatives that set you apart from the competition.

Learn more about how a DrFirst partnership can position your company and your customers for success at drfir.st/partners.



About DrFirst

Since 2000, DrFirst has pioneered healthcare technology solutions and consulting services that securely connect people at touchpoints of care to improve patient outcomes. We create unconventional solutions that solve care collaboration, medication management, price transparency, and adherence challenges faced in healthcare. We unite the Healthiverse—the interconnected healthcare universe—by providing our clients with real-time access to the information they need, exactly when and how they need it, so patients get the best care possible. DrFirst solutions are used by nearly 325,000 healthcare professionals, including 220,000+ prescribers, 71,000+ pharmacies, 300 EHRs and HIS, and 1,500+ hospitals in the U.S. and Canada.

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