

Special Audio Transcript

Headline: National Football League Readies New EHR System To Boost Care Quality for Players

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If there's one thing the National Football League thrives on, it's competition.

So when the NFL went out to bid for an electronic health record system, it made a number of vendors battle it out for the contract.

This is a special report for *iHealthBeat*, a daily news service of the California HealthCare Foundation. I'm Kenny Goldberg.

The Westborough, Mass.-based eClinicalWorks prevailed. CEO and Co-Founder Girish Kumar Navani says he's done a lot of deals since he started the company 13 years ago, but this one feels like he just won the Super Bowl.

***(Navani): "I'm a die-hard National Football League fan. And you couldn't have asked me for something more special."***

The plan is to put eClinicalWorks' EHR system in place for all 32 teams. It will provide real-time tracking of injuries and treatments for the league's 1,696 players in all settings, including training facilities and games.

***(Navani): "And what's also planned for is interoperability to local labs, integration to all the physicians who provide opinions and second opinions, as well, and integrations to pharmacies. So it is a comprehensive electronic health record system deployment for every club."***

What's more, Navani says his system will be accessible via a mobile application.

***(Navani): "We're able to run on devices like iPads and devices that can be easily carried on game day. It makes the product quite unique in its deployment models, and it's one of the more intuitive products in the market."***

The EHR system will have game-footage video fed directly into players' records, so that the league can better track how injuries occur. But beyond

some of these custom features, the basic system isn't all that different than the technology that's deployed in many hospitals.

University of California-San Diego Health Sciences was one of the early adopters of EHRs; it made the conversion from paper records 12 years ago.

Today, the hospital system manages the health records of more than one million patients. The American Hospital Association has rated UC-San Diego as one of the "Most Wired" hospitals in the U.S.

UC-San Diego's chief information officer, Ed Babakanian, says EHRs have helped transform care.

***(Babakanian): "We've been able to really reduce the turnaround time for treatment of patients significantly, and that translates really into improved outcomes, quality of care, certainly patient safety, and improved our efficiency even more, without wasting a lot of time."***

But the security of EHRs is a constant concern.

Federal health officials say data breaches have exposed the records of more than 19 million Americans in the last three years alone.

The NFL wants team doctors and other medical staff to have complete access to players' EHRs, both online and on mobile devices. That could pose a significant security risk, when you consider the celebrity status of some of the league's star players.

The U.S. Olympic Committee has dealt with similar challenges. It adopted an EHR system this past June that covers more than 2,000 athletes.

Bill Moreau, managing director of USOC's sports medicine division, says each Olympian has an average of seven or eight people involved in their health care. Remote access to their system is essential, and so is tight security.

***(Moreau): "There's multiple steps of the pass code to get into it. You have to go through more than one procedure. There's also some questions that are related to identity recognition. And from a clinician's standpoint, if it's a sensitive, high-profile patient, we can actually collect a special security privacy file for those individuals, where no one can penetrate the record besides a specific, identified individual. If they attempt to, then it leaves a footprint and also messages me as the managing director that someone's trying to penetrate the file."***

Moreau says as far as keeping track of athletes' medical records, USOC's EHR system has been a game changer.

***(Moreau): "It's probably one of the single most important things we've done this year in sports medicine for the United States Olympic Committee. Because of the powerful analytics package, we can track not only injury, but also illness. And we'll be able to help those individuals perhaps identify performance factors that can assist them, whether it's through a blood laboratory or through exercise protocols."***

Moreau says this is the first time that U.S. Olympians have had all of their records in one place. In addition, it provides for a more collaborative atmosphere for health care providers. Moreau believes that will lead to better care for the athletes.

Brian Ahier oversees health IT at Mid-Columbia Medical Center in The Dalles, Oregon. He's also on the board of the Oregon chapter of Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society, the national not-for-profit that promotes the use of IT in the health care industry.

Ahier says despite all of the programs to promote adoption of EHRs, there's still a lot of paper in health care.

That's why he thinks the trend towards EHRs among sports organizations is an encouraging sign.

***(Ahier): "The NFL, the NBA, the Olympics, these organizations that are now deploying EHR systems, they're not part of the financial incentive program from the federal government, or even really part of the health reform efforts that are under way. But they're organizations that are seeing the value of electronic systems that can better coordinate care, and take better care of the players."***

The NFL plans to roll out its system next year. Eight teams will use it initially, with the rest of the league following shortly thereafter.

This has been a special report for *iHealthBeat*, a daily news service from the California HealthCare Foundation. If you have feedback or other issues you'd like to have addressed, please email us at [IHB@chcf.org](mailto:IHB@chcf.org). I'm Kenny Goldberg. Thanks for listening.