# SUCCESS STORY | Facing Peak Season, Tahoe Turns to Out-of-the-Box EDIS to Meet Meaningful Use Deadline

## Tahoe Forest Hospital

**Location**
Truckee, California

## Incline Village Community Hospital

**Location**
Incline Village, Nevada

**Emergency Department**
10,000 APV

**Solutions**
- EV physician documentation
- EV nurse documentation
- EV patient tracking
- EV CPOE
- EV discharge instructions

## Results

- Clinical information exchange across the health system
- 100% clinical adoption of EDIS
- Decreased redundancy in diagnostic testing
- Faster access to radiology and laboratory test results
- Safer medication ordering process
- More complete patient documentation

## The Challenge

Towering pines, colorful songbirds and the turquoise depths of Lake Tahoe draw more than a million tourists to the area each summer. As one of the busiest times of the year, summer is rarely the time to tackle a new project, but faced with an impending Meaningful Use deadline, Tahoe Forest Health System's transition to an electronic system couldn't wait.

The health system's two hospitals—Tahoe Forest Hospital and Incline Village Community Hospital—serve six counties in two states, a rural geographic region that covers approximately 3,500 square miles. ED use at the hospitals fluctuates as much as fivefold between peak and "off" seasons, from perhaps 20 patient visits per 24-hour period to as many as 100.

The initial installation was scheduled for June, just as the EDs were preparing for the regular onslaught of summer boating, hiking and jet-ski injuries. To prevent disruptions in care, Tahoe Forest Health System's administrators and physician advisers looked for an ED information system (EDIS) that clinicians and other staff could learn and adopt easily and quickly—despite the burgeoning workflow.

## The Solution

Tahoe Forest Health System's ED volume at both facilities is disproportionate to that of its inpatient and ambulatory sectors (approximately 10,000 annual patient visits in the ED versus roughly 2,000 inpatient discharges per year). Hospital leaders decided that the ED needed the best possible system to effectively manage the high ED volume. After evaluating many systems and considering the preferences of stakeholders in the organization, decision makers believed EV™ would be the best choice. EV was the first of three electronic medical record(EMR) systems deployed that year; the other two applications were for ambulatory and inpatient services.

# The Results

## Successful Transition, Stage 1 MU Goal in Sight

EV was launched in mid-June. Since the ED physicians were already familiar with T-System's paper charting system, making the transition to digital documentation was a considerably smoother process.

Additionally, by deploying EV first, Tahoe Forest Health System was able to determine if any of the issues the ED physicians and nurses encountered were inherent to the implementation of an EMR—e.g., decreased productivity due to poor typing skills or the burden of additional documentation required for MU compliance—and which issues were vendor-specific. Of the three systems implemented, administrators and physicians agreed that EV was "by far" the easiest to learn and the most intuitive to use. Leading with EV facilitated the subsequent implementations, as the staff had a better idea of what to expect.

> "It was great that we could adopt a very simple, easy-to-use system first. It let us understand what barriers we faced no matter what system we implemented."
>
> – Lynn Barr, Chief Information Officer
> Tahoe Forest Health System

By integrating the EDIS with the other two applications to permit ED data exchange among all clinicians, Tahoe Forest Health System is streamlining its operations. For instance, since staff members in the hospital laboratories now enter patients' test results electronically, ED physicians can obtain those results more promptly. The enterprise-wide integration of the three EMR systems is also reducing redundant testing, including imaging tests. A large percentage of patients seen in Tahoe Forest Health System's EDs are injured in some type of recreational activity, accounting for a substantial proportion of diagnostic services. Today, physicians and nurses hospital-wide have access to results of tests ordered in the ED.

Syndi Keats, M.D., a long-time emergency physician at Tahoe Forest Health System and a strong proponent of EV during the evaluation process, lauded the improvements in documentation. She credited those enhancements largely to automatic prompts that ensure all fields within a patient's record are completed. A second major improvement she underscored is the potential for reducing errors because physicians' orders entered electronically are now considerably more legible. To further decrease the risk of medication-related errors, Tahoe Forest Health System plans to begin using the eprescribing module.

Because Tahoe Forest Health System is a rural health system, the hospitals' EDs are an extension of the primary care system servicing the six-county area. Once the health system has integrated all of its patient data into a single database, the plan is to use T-System's PerformNext™ Care Continuity solution to strengthen communication and alignment with local primary care physicians, with the goal of improving patient outcomes.

> "Our intention is to integrate primary care that's delivered in the emergency room, so that we can create more of a medical home environment and give our patients the full spectrum of care, particularly those with chronic disease and our sicker patients," Barr said.

With regard to the Meaningful Use deadline and given Tahoe Forest Health System's high volume of ED patients, administrators expect to solely use data captured by EV to attest.