

# Choosing the Right Electronic Medical Record: Key Features and Considerations for Dermatology Practices

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## PRACTICE POINTS

- Choosing an electronic medical record (EMR) built for dermatology workflow is a critical part of practice management.
- Features of an EMR that should be evaluated include support for clinical documentation, scheduling and billing, and customer support.
- The proper EMR can reduce administrative tasks and protect practice revenue, but there is no one-size-fits-all option.

Choosing an electronic medical record (EMR) is an important clinical and financial decision for a dermatology practice. An effective system can streamline workflows, support high-quality patient care, and protect revenue. This article provides a framework to help guide EMR selection, outlining key features and practice considerations specific to dermatology workflows.

Choosing an electronic medical record (EMR) is one of the most important clinical and financial decisions a dermatology practice will make. An effective system can help streamline workflows, support high-quality patient care, and protect revenue, while the wrong choice can slow clinicians down and add to the administrative burden.

Dermatology workflows involve unique documentation, imaging, and billing needs that are not always well served by generic EMR platforms. To help guide the selection of an

EMR, the following framework outlines key features and practice considerations specific to dermatology practices.

## Dermatology-Specific Charting

While many general EMRs offer customization, dermatology practices benefit greatly from ready-built, specialty-specific documentation tools. Key elements to evaluate include the following:

- Preconfigured dermatology templates for common conditions and procedures (eg, acne, psoriasis, melanoma, biopsies, cosmetic treatments)
- Smart-phrase libraries tailored to dermatologic language and examinations
- Ability to create, modify, and share custom templates across providers

*Why It Matters*—Efficient charting reduces documentation time, improves consistency, and supports accurate coding.

## Clinical Photography and Imaging

Dermatology is a highly visual specialty, making clinical photography and image management essential. Important capabilities of an EMR include the following:

- Easy capture, annotation, and longitudinal tracking of clinical images
- Seamless embedding of photographs directly into the patient chart
- Side-by-side comparison of current and prior images
- Secure image storage and camera integration
- Body-mapping tools to mark and track lesion locations visually

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The authors have no relevant financial disclosures to report.

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*Cutis*. 2026 April;117(4):106-107. doi:10.12788/cutis.1374

*Why It Matters*—A high-quality image workflow supports diagnosis, treatment planning, patient education, and medicolegal documentation.

### Coding, Billing, and Revenue Cycle Support

For insurance-based practices, robust billing and revenue cycle management (RCM) tools are critical. For direct-care models, some of these items may be prioritized lower. Key features to compare include the following:

- Support for *International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision, Clinical Modification*; *Current Procedural Terminology*; and dermatology-specific code sets
- Automated coding suggestions tied to clinical documentation
- Reviewing claims for errors and inconsistencies prior to submitting to payers' insurance eligibility verification
- Electronic Remittance Advice/Explanation of Benefits posting and denial management workflows
- Support for cosmetic and self-pay billing
- Ability to generate superbills (itemized receipts for medical services that include *International Classification of Diseases Tenth Revision* and *Current Procedural Terminology* codes; patients can submit these directly to their insurance company for reimbursement) for direct-pay practices

*Why It Matters*—Strong RCM functionality protects revenue, reduces denials, and minimizes staff workload.

### Scheduling and Practice Integration

The most effective EMRs tightly integrate clinical charting with daily practice operations. Features to evaluate include the following:

- Integrated scheduling with color-coded calendars
- Appointment-type templates and block scheduling
- Automated patient reminders via text or email
- Support for multiprovider and multilocation practices
- Integration with outside pathology or lab services

*Why It Matters*—Clear and templated scheduling and practice integration help practices run more smoothly by reducing administrative workload and errors and coordinating communication between providers and even ancillary services.

### Telehealth and Patient Communication Tools

Patient communication and virtual care are increasingly important in dermatology. When evaluating EMRs, compare the following:

- Built-in telehealth functionality vs third-party integrations
- Automated appointment reminders
- Patient portal features (forms, messaging, results)
- Online booking capabilities

*Why It Matters*—Integrated telehealth and patient communication tools improve access to care, enhance

patient engagement, and streamline scheduling, messaging, and virtual visits within dermatology workflows.

### Reporting and Analytics

Reporting capabilities support clinical quality, compliance, and business decision-making. Key reporting areas include the following:

- Clinical reports (outcomes, lesion tracking, disease management)
- Financial reports (revenue per provider, payer mix, visit types)
- Customizable or exportable reporting tools

*Why It Matters*—Robust reporting and analytics help dermatology practices track clinical outcomes, monitor financial performance, and make data-driven decisions to improve both patient care and practice management.

### Support, Training, and User Community

The user experience after implementation of the EMR is just as important as the software itself. Evaluate the following after the EMR is implemented:

- Initial training and onboarding resources
- Availability of dermatology-specific support teams
- Ongoing education, help centers, or user communities
- Access to dedicated implementation or success managers

*Why It Matters*—Strong training and support resources help ensure a smoother EMR implementation, faster staff adoption, and ongoing optimization of the system for dermatology workflows.

### Cost and Overall Value

Finally, look beyond the sticker price. The total cost of ownership includes far more than monthly fees. Compare the following:

- Upfront costs (implementation, data migration, training)
- Subscription pricing (per provider or per user)
- Billing or RCM fees (including percentages of collections if applicable) and payment processing fees
- Costs for add-on modules (telehealth, imaging, analytics)
- Contract length and termination terms

*Why It Matters*—Understanding the full cost of ownership helps dermatology practices choose an EMR that fits their budget long-term while avoiding unexpected fees and contractual limitations.

### Final Thoughts

There is no single "best" EMR for every dermatology practice. The right choice depends on your practice model, payer mix, clinical focus, and growth plans. By evaluating EMRs through a dermatology-specific lens and asking the right questions, you can choose a system that supports both excellent patient care and long-term practice success.