



Open revenue cycle reveals opportunities for patients, providers

At this point, it's likely not a surprising statement to say that implementing innovative technology is a key element of growth. But the impact innovative technology can have should not be underestimated. When was the last time you sent money via Venmo or PayPal? What about the last time you used an app to manage your bank account? Those are all examples of technologies built on an open architecture – a technology opportunity that can help take modernization and automation to the next level.

Open architectures use agents called application programming interfaces (APIs) to enable collaboration between applications. APIs give third parties the opportunity to employ their specialized features and workflows into a software. For example, if a revenue cycle has an open architecture, then a third party that specializes in scheduling can be involved in the development process for that specific function. Additionally, APIs – and the interoperability

associated with APIs – are not exclusive to one third party in an open architecture, thus, creating more flexibility for healthcare systems and developers to mix and match their third-party technologies.

Ideally, open architectures allow the parties involved to assess the strongest option for a workflow or function and plug that into the software architecture. Interoperability, automation, repeatability and specialization are all key advantages of an open architecture. Not to mention, an open architecture is more aligned with a model experience than a closed architecture.

“At a basic level, open architectures are beneficial anywhere that there's a record of truth around a person and a necessity to transport that and share it with others,” says Bob Robke, Vice President and Strategic Growth of RTHS Operations at Cerner.

Bill payment is an example of a revenue cycle “record of truth” that can be streamlined by an open architecture. Assume you’re a patient and you call your provider to make a payment over the phone. Your provider accidentally posts an incorrect payment amount. If the health system’s software does not have an open architecture and uses a historical model that relies on data extract, then you won’t get notified of the payment amount until hours later. At this point, it might be after hours, in which case there would be no one available to immediately address the incorrect payment amount. Now, let’s assess that situation from the lens of a healthcare system that has an open revenue cycle. In an open revenue cycle operating with APIs and a bill payment vendor that can also operate with APIs, the payment amount could be posted in near real-time on an app. In the scenario with the open revenue cycle, the patient benefits from the use of APIs and the open architecture.

“Any time you have a consumer interaction, using APIs has the opportunity to make the consumer experience better,” says Bob Hansen, Senior Director of Product Management at Cerner.

Similarly, Robke states, “Ultimately, patients are positively impacted by open architectures. The care teams working to care for that patient are also positively impacted because they’re able to access the correct information within the workflows and tools used to facilitate the care process – inclusive of the financial element of care delivery. So certainly, revenue cycle management is positively impacted by an open architecture.”

An open and extensible revenue cycle has numerous benefits to healthcare systems. One of the main benefits is that it’s more cost-effective. Revenue cycles that do not utilize APIs tend to have one-off fees for service, in addition to a longer implementation process. An open revenue cycle that uses APIs is much closer aligned to a model experience than one that does not. For these reasons, Cerner is working to modernize its revenue cycle products to best meet the needs of clients and their patients.

Hansen explains that Cerner is moving toward an open and extensible revenue cycle by saying “With the Cerner open interoperability strategy, even if we use a third party to plug a gap, we’re also using APIs to make the third party as strong as possible. We are opening up APIs so that third parties can collaborate with us, which helps lead to a positive experience for clients, end users and the consumer.” He goes on to explain that automation is a key benefit of an open revenue cycle. “Cerner is evaluating the various third parties doing automation and looking toward the ones that we truly think are taking an innovative approach. We are creating partnerships with those third parties to get them into our client base.

Taking this step toward a more streamlined, innovative revenue cycle is validation of the core Cerner belief: Healthcare is too important to stay the same.

About Oracle Cerner

We are continuously building on our foundation of intelligent solutions for the healthcare industry. Our technologies connect people and systems, and our wide range of services support the clinical, financial and operational needs of organizations of every size.

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