

# Case for a Dedicated Occupational Health Information Management Solution

**Why an enterprise wide electronic medical record (EMR) system is not optimal for the management of employment-related electronic medical records**

**Empowering Trust<sup>®</sup>**





## Introduction

Success in occupational health service delivery largely depends on a healthcare organization's ability to meet the needs of all stakeholders. In hospitals and health systems, occupational health, e.g., workers' compensation injury treatment and management, screening exams, medical surveillance, wellness/health promotion and outpatient rehabilitation, is a strategic business initiative that spans the care continuum. It provides a dynamic portal of access to healthcare services for employers, employees and their dependents.

As an information-intensive business encompassing a broad spectrum of services, occupational health programs typically cannot achieve their full potential without a dedicated information management solution designed to help ensure connectivity, security, immediacy and accuracy in data collection, documentation, reporting, coding and billing.

A healthcare organization's commitment to occupational health data collection/management and clinical recordkeeping is particularly relevant given:

- Increasing recognition of occupational medicine as an outcome-based specialty and pay-for-performance model
- Complexities around the intersection of privacy laws and employment-related legislation (federal acts including Health Insurance Portability and Accountability, Americans with Disabilities, Family and Medical Leave and Genetic Information Non-Discrimination), state workers' compensation rules, and occupational health and safety regulations
- The need to demonstrate all contributions occupational health makes to a health system, including downstream revenue and community goodwill

## Benefits of a specialized information management system

A key aspect of a healthcare organization's ability to prosper in occupational health is the use of an electronic medical record (EMR) system that is maintained separately from an enterprisewide EMR system. Having invested in a global EMR system, healthcare organizations understandably want to maximize the system's capabilities. However, large-scale inpatient and ambulatory care EMR systems are not designed to manage clinical, legal and financial aspects of occupational health as a business enterprise rather than a hospital department.

Applying a systemwide information management solution to occupational health may be compared to using a blunt instrument to perform brain surgery. While experts in health information technology acknowledge the advantages of using an ambulatory care EMR system, they also note that integrated components of such systems are not necessarily the best match for certain providers' needs. In addition, some health IT observers have suggested that large-scale EMR systems may impede responsiveness and business innovation.

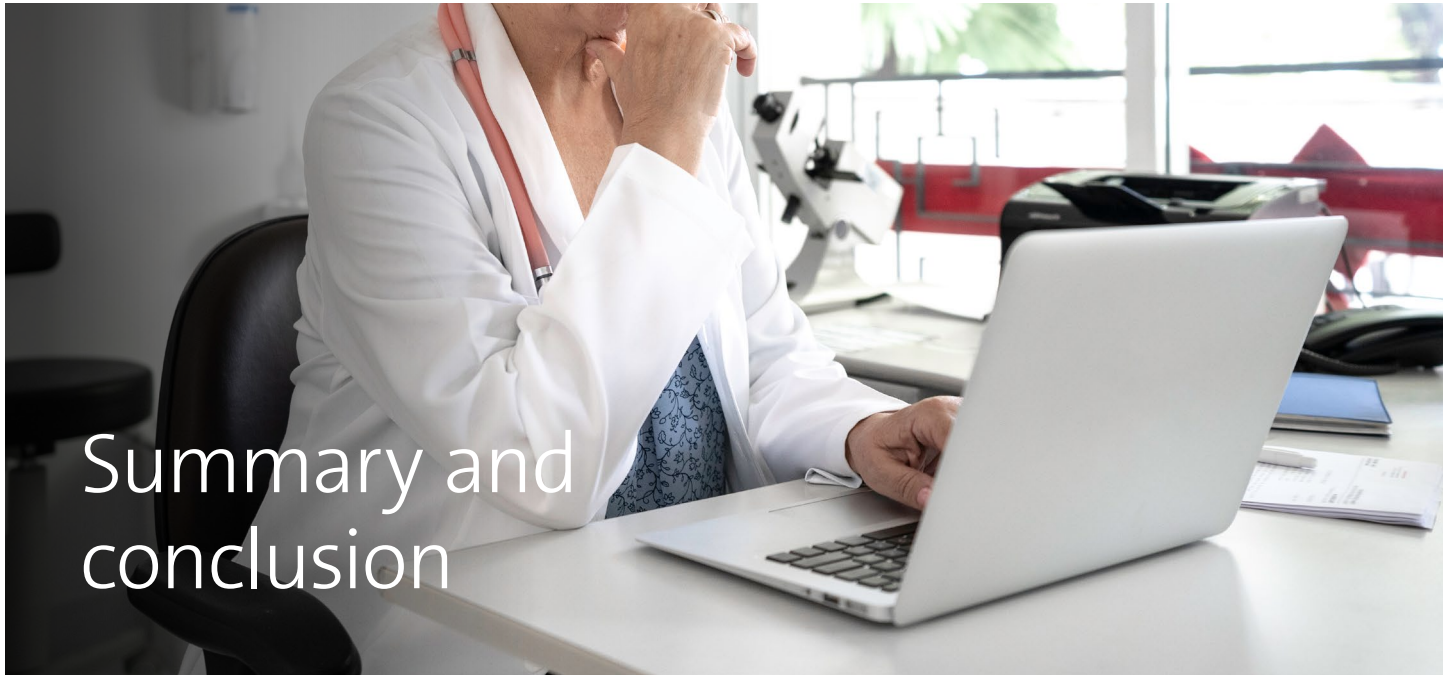






Many issues should be considered when deciding whether to implement and/or retain UL's dedicated occupational health management solution, SYSTOC®, and its electronic medical record functions, or attempt to adapt an enterprise EMR system to the unique needs of occupational medicine. Consider these key factors:

1. Work-related medical and employment records are subject to an evolving scope of laws that dictate how employers may use, disclose and dispose of them. When an EMR system does not facilitate distinctions between personal health and work-related health, it creates confidentiality and other liability risks for the health system. SYSTOC is designed to protect patient privacy while allowing appropriate access to employment-related health information.
2. Employment law attorneys advise employers to use a health IT solution that allows them to segregate information and adhere to confidentiality safeguards for services including:
  - Pre-placement drug screen results
  - Post-employment physical examination results
  - Health insurance claim information
  - Return-to-work releases from physicians
  - Workers' compensation medical records
  - Information describing disabilities
  - Health and life insurance application information
  - OSHA supplemental incident reports
3. Because the employer/payer, not the employee, is typically the guarantor for occupational health services, fees are often negotiated and customer company profiles vary widely. SYSTOC accommodates these complexities.
4. When an EMR system contains medical history unrelated to work, patients/employees may be hesitant to sign release forms, impeding information flow and possibly the delivery of appropriate medical care. SYSTOC provides secure connectivity and confidentiality regardless of where services are delivered.
5. SYSTOC is designed to manage workers' compensation documentation, claim submission and payment systems to maximize reimbursement. SYSTOC is also capable of aggregating data and generating trend reports for employers, a critical contributor to customer relations and retention.



## Summary and conclusion

Efforts to further develop a coordinated occupational health delivery system with SYSTOC as the information platform are likely to have considerable benefits for a hospital or health system. In moving forward, healthcare organizations can successfully leverage occupational health as a multidisciplinary practice that will allow them to further cultivate important relationships with employers while astutely managing worker health, injury, illness and disability.

To remain competitive and adaptable, healthcare professionals must be prepared to address employers' clinical needs while simultaneously offering services in a manner that is cost-effective and compliant with federal and state regulations. Experience shows lack of commitment to a comprehensive occupational health initiative can result in patient flight and/or ceding business to current and prospective competitors.

Investment in a dedicated occupational health information management solution with an EMR application is a business decision that supports safer, healthier workplaces for people, a goal that aligns with the objectives of hospitals and employers in the communities they serve.

**To learn more about SYSTOC, visit [UL.com/resources/apps/systoc](https://ul.com/resources/apps/systoc).**



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