RESEARCH, TRANSLATED · TIME · DOCUMENTATION

For every 8 scheduled patient-care hours, 5.8 hours of active EHR work.

A national study of ambulatory physician EHR use, read fully and translated for private medical practice.

WHAT THIS IS
A plain-language translation of Holmgren, Sinsky, Rotenstein and colleagues, "National Comparison of Ambulatory Physician Electronic Health Record Use Across Specialties," Journal of General Internal Medicine, 2024.

HOW TO USE IT
Use these numbers as a national comparison point, not a prediction for your practice — this is normalized active EHR time per eight scheduled patient-care hours, not necessarily 5.8 added hours after clinic. Then measure your own day with the DIY Time-Study Worksheet in Stage 2 of this library. National averages are a starting point. Your number is the one that matters.

What the study did

Researchers analyzed EHR-use metadata for ambulatory physicians across the United States using the Epic EHR, captured between November 2021 and April 2022. This is measured system time, not self-report: the EHR logged what physicians actually did and for how long.

What it found

5.8 hrs

Physicians spent a mean of **5.8 hours per 8 patient-care scheduled hours** actively working in the EHR.

2.3 hrs

Documentation was the largest component at **2.3 hours**, followed by chart review (1.1 hours), orders (0.8 hours), and inbox work (0.8 hours).

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOUR PRACTICE
That's about 44 minutes of EHR work for every hour scheduled with a patient, and nearly 55 in primary care. Much of it happens after clinic, not inside the visit, so it does not simply add onto an 8-hour day. Documentation is the largest single activity at 2.3 hours, a logical first target, though not larger than chart review, orders, and inbox combined. That is why documentation is where AI tools aim first, and why this library treats provider training as the first fix and tool setup as the second. A tool pointed at an unmeasured, untrained

workflow automates the chaos it finds.

What this study is not

It covers physicians on one EHR vendor (Epic), so it may not match your system exactly. It measures time in the EHR, not the value of that time. And it predates the current generation of ambient AI tools, which is exactly why it works as a baseline: this is the "before" picture the newer tools are trying to change.

SOURCES · CHECK OUR WORK

Holmgren AJ, Sinsky CA, Rotenstein L, et al. National Comparison of Ambulatory Physician Electronic Health Record Use Across Specialties. J Gen Intern Med. 2024. doi:10.1007/s11606-024-08930-4

Full text: pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11534958

Publisher: link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11606-024-08930-4