Recap of Epic's 2013 Users Group Meeting
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In September, I had the opportunity to travel to Epic's annual Users Group Meeting (UGM) at Epic's headquarters in Verona, Wisconsin. Each year, Epic invites representatives from its customers' organizations to attend the four-day conference for networking and learning. Over 15,000 representatives and Epic employees attended the 2013 UGM, making it the largest one yet. Approximately 80 staff from OSUWMC were in attendance at this year's event, one of the largest contingents from any single organization.

In the months leading up to the conference, organizations can submit proposals for educational sessions, and if chosen, presenters develop an hour-long session based on their topic. These sessions take place constantly throughout the four-day event, and attendees can observe almost any presentation they'd like. This year, Epic chose 16 proposals submitted by OSUWMC, and our team gave these presentations throughout the conference.

On the first day of the conference, attendees could elect to attend one of a dozen or more Advisory Councils, which loosely correspond to job roles (CIOs, physicians, project managers, trainers) or software functions (financial, surgery, etc.). Because I work in communications at OSUWMC, I chose to attend the Communications Advisory Council (CAC). Throughout the day, the CAC covered topics ranging from getting users on board with the EMR implementation to making sure they're informed enough to use the system correctly. A common theme was the difficulty of communicating with physicians, who are busy and want brief, direct communication over all else.

The day wore on, and then it was my turn. Late Monday afternoon, I gave my presentation, titled "The Not-So-Final Frontier: Post-Live Communications" (forgive the movie allusion; the UGM theme this year was "Deep Space"). I've worked at OSUWMC for just over a year, and my main responsibility is to make sure users find out about changes to our Epic system quickly yet thoroughly. This involves working with analysts and trainers to gather information that I make available through a web site and various other delivery methods. My presentation focused on strategies for meeting users' ongoing communications needs after go live; even after we flip the switch to turn the system on, the work isn't "done." I explained how I organized our massive folders of documentation left over from the go live and developed a more sustainable process for the future. The crowd seemed engaged and had many questions at the end, so I was pleased with the session's outcome.

Over the next three days, I saw development previews for upcoming versions of Epic's software, reprised my presentation in a panel later in the week and sat in on many presentations, most notably those related to Meaningful Use. In sum, organizations are very concerned about Meaningful Use, even with out-of-the-box solutions and support from Epic. The MU requirements are often vague and difficult to meet, in addition to

affecting CMS payments, which culminates in much anxiety for health care organizations.

Now that I've returned to Ohio and my day-to-day routine, I'm going back through my notes and handouts to figure out which UGM lessons I can apply to my work here. Some of them are easy to put in place, but others might require months of analysis and negotiation to make them happen. In the end though, the real value of UGM is the opportunity to hear about the challenges that other organizations have faced and how they've been able to overcome those issues.