

ECRI's *Strategic Insights for Ambulatory Care* newsletter is being offered to CAPIC insureds at no cost. If you are interested in visiting any of the links in this edition, please contact Yvette Ervin, Vice President, CAPIC Risk Management, at [YErvin@CAPphysicians.com](mailto:YErvin@CAPphysicians.com).



# ECRI

## Strategic Insights for Ambulatory Care

**January 27, 2025**

*Strategic Insights for Ambulatory Care* is a biweekly service provided by ECRI and the Cooperative of American Physicians (CAP). We welcome your comments; please send them to [\*\*AmbulatoryCareRM@ecri.org\*\*](mailto:AmbulatoryCareRM@ecri.org).



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## Spotlight on Telehealth

Telehealth has greatly improved access to and utilization of healthcare, particularly for rural or underserved areas. Despite the rapid expansion in usage of telehealth, some healthcare organizations still experience barriers to implementation and usage. The guidance article **Telehealth** describes ways in which risk managers can best plan new telehealth programs, update their existing programs, and ensure that all laws and regulations regarding telehealth are understood.

Related resources:

- **Benefits and Risks of Telehealth**
- **Cost and Reimbursement Considerations for Telehealth**
- **Cybersecurity in Ambulatory Care**
- **Regulatory and Liability Considerations for Telehealth**



## What's New?

- Blog: Leveraging ECRI's Top 10 Health Technology Hazards Report: A Strategic Imperative for Healthcare in 2026 [read now](#)

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### Patient Safety & Relations

#### "Difficult " Patients More Likely to Have Mental Health Concerns, Chronic Pain

**What's the news.** Providers perceived 17% of clinic patients to be "difficult," according to a [January 13, 2026, review in the \*Annals of Internal Medicine\*](#); these patients were more likely to have depression, anxiety, more symptoms, personality disorders, or chronic pain.

**Why it matters.** De-escalation techniques may help manage certain patient encounters and can be key to providing appropriate care while avoiding the use of stigmatizing language in the patient's medical record.

**How ECRI can help.** Staff training, de-escalation techniques, and other important considerations are discussed in [Ask ECRI: Training Staff to Handle Difficult Patients](#).

#### Emoji Use in the EHR Raises Questions of Potential Misinterpretation

**What's the news.** Emoji use in the electronic health record (EHR) was rare overall, though more distinct emojis were identified than previously reported, which raises concerns about potential misinterpretation when they are included in patient-directed communications, according to a [research letter published January 14, 2026, in \*JAMA Network Open\*](#).

**Why it matters.** Effective clinical communication is essential to high-quality patient care, and providers must ensure that emoji use does not result in misinterpretation or confusion for patients.

**How ECRI can help.** The guidance article [Documentation: A Primer on Charting in the Medical Record](#) discusses how organizations can implement and maintain an effective documentation system.

#### Children Late on Vaccination Schedule Less Likely to Receive MMR Vaccination

**What's the news.** From 2021 to 2024, timely measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccination decreased by three percentage points; children who were late on 2- and 4-month immunizations were significantly more likely not to receive MMR vaccination by 2 years of age, according to a [study published January 2, 2026, in JAMA Network Open](#).

**Why it matters.** Measles cases have been rising due to decreased vaccination coverage, emphasizing the importance of identifying and mitigating barriers to timely childhood vaccines.

**How ECRI can help.** ECRI named [Vaccine Coverage Gaps and Errors](#) among its top 10 patient safety concerns in 2022.

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## Worker & Environmental Safety

### Nearly Three in Four Nurses Report Emotional Exhaustion due to Work

**What's the news.** A 2025 survey of 1,000 US registered nurses found that 74% reported feeling emotionally exhausted from work multiple times each week, 53% seriously considered leaving the nursing profession at least monthly in the past 6 months, and 49% have been worried they might make a mistake due to fatigue or feeling overwhelmed, according to an [article published January 5, 2026, by Joyce University](#).

**Why it matters.** Stress, fatigue, and staffing shortages can contribute to nurse burnout, which can negatively impact staff well-being and patient safety.

**How ECRI can help.** The guidance article [Fatigue in Healthcare Workers](#) discusses the effects of fatigue on healthcare workers and patient safety and provides strategies to minimize fatigue-related risk.

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## Legal & Regulatory

### System Hardening Can Reduce Cyberattack Vulnerabilities, Protect ePHI

**What's the news.** System hardening (i.e., a process that can reduce vulnerability to cyberattacks) and security baselines can be effective methods for regulated entities to enhance security and protect electronic protected health information (ePHI), according to the US Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights' (OCR) [January 2026 OCR Cybersecurity Newsletter](#).

**Why it matters.** ePHI is protected under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), the Security Rule (45 CFR Part 160 and Subparts A and C of Part 164).

**How ECRI can help.** The guidance article **Cybersecurity in Ambulatory Care** can be used to better understand the organization's current approaches, identify opportunities for improvement, and clearly define roles in cybersecurity within the organization.

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