Elion

Buyer Review Transcript

Product Reviewed	CareAlign
Reviewer Tech Stack	Epic
Other Products Considered	
Date	August 30, 2023
Expert Role	Student Doctor
Organization Type	Large Health System
Payment Model	Fee for Service

So today, we're chatting about CareAlign and how it's used at your organization. Before we jump into that, could you give a brief overview of your organization and your role there?

As a medical student in a large health system, I've had the chance to use CareAlign in situations including rotations and electives where I've worked alongside residents who act as the covering provider for patients. We used CareAlign as our go-to system for keeping track of and managing these patients. It's been a really useful tool in helping us stay organized as a medical team.

How long have you been using the product?

I've been using CareAlign for about three years now. I first came across CareAlign at the end of 2020, and it has been used by almost every elective inpatient team at our affiliated hospitals.

What function does CareAlign serve for you?

At a high level, CareAlign is used for tracking patient tasks and managing patient care on the inpatient side. It excels at aggregating and summarizing patient data, acting as a visualization layer on top of Epic. CareAlign allows for succinct patient summaries, tracking patient status throughout their hospitalization, and focusing on vitals, labs, imaging, and other studies. Additionally, it aids in managing patient tasks and keeping track of what needs to be done on a daily and weekly basis, as well as indicating the criticality of each task. It also maintains a timeline of important events that occur during a patient's hospitalization. Personally, I find the notes section of CareAlign useful for staying organized for two distinct use cases: when we're on a consult and when we're on the covering team.

On the consult service, we receive requests from other medical teams in the hospital, usually from the emergency department or the inpatient team. Once we receive the call, we review the patient's chart. I start by checking CareAlign, which is a great source of summarized information about the patient and their medical history, detailing what has happened during their hospital stay so far. Basically, the patient came in with a problem, received treatment, and now we are being brought in to assist with their care. CareAlign provides us with all this information in a summarization field that includes details about previous medical problems, current issues, and the reason for the consultation. It also contains all the patient's data from the hospital stay, allowing us to quickly understand the specific situation and assess the stability of the patient. During day-to-day management, we see the patient, provide our input, and then communicate that back to the covering team. Throughout the patient's stay, we can access a record of everything that has been done to manage them.

If I'm on the covering team, it's my responsibility to input all the necessary information when we take over the patient's care. CareAlign is a fantastic tool for managing various tasks related to patient care. I primarily use it to ensure that I have a well-organized system for listing and completing tasks for each patient, ensuring that no tasks are overlooked or forgotten. The alternative to using CareAlign is writing tasks down on paper, which is not ideal because it's not centralized and visible to the entire team. I often view CareAlign as task management software, similar to Asana or Trello, but designed specifically for inpatient care.

So we've talked about task management, data aggregation, and summarization. Can you discuss some strengths and weaknesses?

Yeah, the task management feature is definitely a strong feature of CareAlign. It solves the problem of managing patient tasks, which is a huge issue for inpatient teams. There's no other efficient way to have a centralized record of what tasks need to be done for a particular patient. And as far as I know, Epic doesn't offer that collaborative functionality. Using pen and paper as an alternative just isn't ideal. With CareAlign, medical team members can immediately collaborate and stay on top of tasks.

I think one of the weaknesses of the system is that it doesn't properly distinguish between different users and their ability to access or update information. It's like a free-for-all, where anyone who has access to a patient's CareAlign can make changes to it. It doesn't prioritize the covering team, and there's no recognition of their specific role. This means that someone outside the team can add or delete tasks for a patient's care. Additionally, it relies heavily on unstructured text for data inputs. This leads to situations where people would create to-do lists within a patient summary, disregarding the app's built-in to-do list functionality. This can cause confusion as to which list serves as the actual to-do list.

Another issue is that there is no revision history available. So if I were to write a task and later update it, I wouldn't be able to see what I initially wrote. This might not be a problem for me personally, but it becomes an issue if another team member needs to see the previous version of the task. The previous information gets overwritten and lost, and that's obviously not great.

Overall, I find that CareAlign addresses the issue, and that there aren't any better solutions that I'm aware of, but the approach it takes can still cause problems if the team isn't aligned on the right processes and how to structure everything.

How does CareAlign compare to other products you've tried?

One strength of CareAlign is its ability to summarize patient data. To some extent, Epic can too, but Epic's interface isn't very good, and it's also very slow. The mobile app is also not as good. CareAlign excels at summarizing information and runs smoothly on mobile devices. It is significantly faster, has a superior interface compared to Epic's Haiku, and is more accessible and user-friendly. When I need to swiftly access a patient's data on my phone, I prefer using CareAlign over Epic.

How reliable is CareAlign?

I feel like it's pretty stable. They haven't made any major updates in the time I've been using it, around three years. The interface is still exactly the same. They did add one big feature, an emergency section tab, although I'm not quite sure what it's used for. But honestly, I can't recall a single time when the app was down or crashed. And as far as bugs go, I can't think of any that I've encountered while using the app.

Regarding the Epic integration, how have you found the quality of the data aggregation between CareAlign and Epic?

I think CareAlign only syncs data in one direction, so it can't write data back into Epic. The summary notes and tracking features seem to be exclusive to CareAlign, pulling in relevant patient data.

As for the data itself, it handles vitals, imaging, and some labs quite well. It displays basic patient labs effectively, but it falls short with other lab results. The interface for viewing these labs is not user-friendly, requiring sorting through a list. Labs that aren't part of the basic panels are particularly challenging to find and view. CareAlign does a great job of summarizing all the necessary data for patient care in one screen or click. It takes data from Epic and consolidates it into a single, user-friendly interface.

Do you feel like your health system made the correct choice in moving forward with CareAlign?

I haven't come across any other products specifically geared toward inpatient medical teams. All things considered, I think it was a good decision. It's important for medical teams to have good task management tools, and Epic doesn't quite offer that. I'm not certain if there were other options available, but overall, I think it was the right choice.

Would you highlight any major areas of growth for CareAlign to move toward?

From a high-level perspective, internal medicine teams operate using agile workflows.They have sprints, where you plan your tasks for the week. They also have daily stand-ups, similar to rounding, where you discuss issues and blockers. There's continuous iteration on how you approach patient cases. In that sense, products like Slack, Trello, Asana, and better data visualization software could be integrated into the workflow for inpatient medical teams.

It would be good if CareAlign had messaging functionality that allows you to pull in patient data, centralize tasks, and have discussions. The current messaging system we use, Epic Secure Chat, offers a poor user experience, so having task management and communication in one place would be great.

CareAlign should also get more into data analytics. It would be great to see the product report trends on patient data. For instance, this would be a great area to integrate language modeling to provide a summarization of a patient's chart. Going a step further, they could even integrate machine learning modeling to make suggestions for patient care, but there are a lot of regulations surrounding that type of product.

Do you have any advice for buyers who are looking at selecting this type of product right now?

Yeah, it works really well. I've never heard anyone say anything negative about CareAlign. People seem pretty satisfied with the increased efficiency they gain from using the system. I haven't come across any other similar products, but I think, based solely on CareAlign, most users have a positive opinion of it.