In addition to electronically storing patient’s information in an accessible and standardized fashion, electronic health records (EHRs) can support a variety of more sophisticated functions, including clinical decision support (CDS), which facilitates clinicians’ decisionmaking, through the integration of patient-specific information and established clinical guidelines. Although EHRs have been shown to be a useful tool for improving health care quality and safety, health care organizations have come to recognize that just having an EHR does not equate to quality improvement. Health care organizations must rethink the processes of patient care as they implement EHRs to ensure that patient care workflow matches EHR functions, if improvements in health care quality are to be realized. A regional referral hospital in rural Iowa did that, illustrating the synergy between EHRs and the redesigning of care processes and how such synergy can generate benefits for patients. The following are examples of their successes:

- Pharmacists from the rural referral center hospital now use the EHR system to remotely check medication dosing and drug alerts for critical access hospitals in their network, helping to avoid medical errors in pharmacy care for hospitalized patients in rural Iowa.
- CDS featuring automatic alerts and notifications within EHRs helped improve the timeliness of indwelling catheter removal, thereby decreasing urinary tract infections (UTIs) after surgery, a complication that can result in worsened patient outcomes and longer hospitalizations (see Figure 1).

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1 A catheter that is inserted into the bladder and allowed to remain.