

MHS Information Sharing for VA Providers

Video Transcription – Full Video

(Time: 7:42)

http://www.ehealth.va.gov/MHS_VA_video.asp

DR. ROSS FLETCHER:

Hello, I'm Dr. Ross Fletcher. I'm the Chief of Staff at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Washington, D.C. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Defense Department (DoD) have been working together to share information for quite some time.

Way back to the year 2000, this has easily been done electronically and immediately through the Federal Health Information Exchange and the Bidirectional Health Information Exchange. We are commonly seeing the same patient and therefore commonly need to see the same information. The benefit to both agencies is predominately the benefit to the patient themselves. And of course, that's our primary mission – we're here to take care of the Veteran or the Servicemen respectively. They often become the same person and to have a strong continuum of care from DoD to VA is a major goal of all of us, including the President.

Data sharing allows any provider to be able to see exactly what's wrong with the patient and what has been done for the patient. That is the first step to good care. When we can immediately get that information with information sharing, we save a lot of time talking to the patient, and we can focus on his immediate problems knowing we are safe and not covering some of the background information that has already been used for his health. It's very important that clinicians and patients both understand what data is being shared. It has to be really easy to obtain and it has to be very user-friendly.

When they are sharing information, it's always shared in a very secure way. There's no way that we can do it otherwise. We have made that pledge to the patient and there are regulations involved as well. But whenever information is being shared, it is shared over secure lines. Security is always the hallmark of the VA and DoD systems. We cannot allow anyone else to see private health information unless they have the authority to do so, usually granted by the patient.

In order to see data from DoD sites, one merely needs to look at the upper right hand button to see if it's highlighted in blue. If it's highlighted in blue rather than gray, then remote data is available. If I simply click on remote data, you can see that it's available from Baltimore, a VA site, and DoD. And I simply click on DoD and now I can see any information that is available there as well. I can use one or two systems – either the VistaWeb, or down on the lower right hand corner, Reports.

If I simply click on Reports, I then can see the availability in the upper left corner of Defense Department reports. I can see the allergies. I can see the discharge summaries. I can see the lab data, and that includes chemistries in hematology. I can see the pharmacy, outpatient data and progress notes. And radiology reports as we have discussed. I simply have to click the one I want.

I click chemistry and hematology, and look over to the right and see that those chemistries and hematologies have come up and they are up for Bethesda Navy, Walter Reed and Washington. So several military sites and VA sites are all in the same list all together. You might notice that in this column, there is a flag, and the flag says whether the value was high or low. Simply by sorting all this data by the flag column – that is, clicking on the flag – I now see all the low values from either site: Bethesda Navy, Washington, and all the high values. And very quickly, I then have a list that's totally normal from this point down. And at this point down, this is indicated. I can scroll down a long way and all those values are normal.

I may not want to see any of them at all and only see the simple sorted number that is high on the chemistries. So that makes it very simple. I can see progress notes just as simply by clicking progress notes, radiology reports and/or the patient's allergies, which you can see at the top. If I come to the right hand side and clicked instead of remote data, but VistaWeb, I see much the same capability, but in a web based procedure if I go to the right side, I can click proceed and then I can see all the information on the side. If you look at all of those things that are highlighted with a crucial form, like allergies, visits in admission, discharge summaries, laboratory and that laboratory can be similarly expanded in the previous view by simply clicking on chemistry and hematology, I would see that in this view and not in the reports view.

So from the VA, you can see into DoD through either VistaWeb or the reports view simply by clicking the remote button that is available

on all sites in all VA hospitals. And it is similarly easy to see all of our data from DoD sites, so sharing is quite complete and very easy with a few clicks of the button.

If I go to the image system, this particular window suggests that there are images not just at Baltimore but also at DoD. It is in red – that means they are not being seen in my abstract window on the left. But if I click the red, it turns to green and it fetches all possibilities in DoD. And once I know what the possibilities are I can click on those individual views and look into DoD packs and see the x-rays from the VA side. So not only do we share text images, we also share films back and forth between many DoD sites. So this is a valuable addition to sharing – the fact that we can see all images anywhere in the VA means that if DoD only sends the images to one site, they are able to be seen by anybody in any other hospital when they actually see the patient.

So the remote view is quite extensive at the VA and it allows us to see any information that has been sent across with the Bidirectional Health Information Exchange, which I've just demonstrated. We can see images almost as soon as they are available in their computers – we are seeing them in ours.