

Cerner VA EHR system down more than 50 times since first installation

by [John R. Fischer](#), Senior Reporter | May 17, 2022

Health IT



The Cerner EHR system set to be installed at all healthcare sites under the Department of Veterans Affairs has been down more than 50 times since launching at its pilot location in 2020.

Known as Millenium, the system experienced 42 “unplanned degradations” and eight “unplanned outages” between 2020 and April 2022, [according to The Spokesman-Review](#). Two additional outages occurred on April 25 and 26.



The VA's new EHR system has been down more than 50 times since its first installment in October 2020.

Developed by Cerner [starting in 2018](#) to provide veterans with faster and seamless access to care at the VA’s more than 1,200 sites, the solution was first installed in October 2020 at Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center in Spokane, Washington. Initially estimated to be under \$10 billion, the cost was later upgraded to \$16 billion. Still behind schedule, the project today is estimated to cost as much as \$21 billion, with another \$2 billion added on for each additional year needed to finish it.

The solution has run into several setbacks that have pushed back its full implementation. One occurred in early April 2022 when a nationwide outage took down the EHR systems used by the VA, as well as the U.S. Department of Defense and the Coast Guard. For three hours, over 95,000 clinicians were unable to access or update their patient medical data.

The month before, administrators at Mann-Grandstaff [took the system offline temporarily](#) after an update led to potential data corruption. Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R.-Spokane) called the shutdown “another event in a series of challenges that the new electronic health record has created for staff and veterans at the facility,” and called for the system’s end-of-March launch at the VA hospital in Walla Walla to be delayed until the issues were resolved.

“No matter the type or size of incident, VA and Cerner employ an extensive incident management protocol to ensure users can continue to provide quick, safe and effective care,” VA spokesman Randal Noller told The Spokesman-Review in an email.

He added, however, that unlike the incident in early April, most incidents were not “large-scale outages” and that many of the “degradations of service” affected only some users at Mann-Grandstaff and its affiliated clinics in Spokane, Coeur d’Alene, Sandpoint, Wenatchee and Libby, Montana.

In November, issues [were found within the EHR’s scheduling platform](#) that “reduced the system’s effectiveness and risked delays in patient care." New reports said that the VA was aware of these limitations prior to installing the solution in Spokane. Despite the delays and concerns about patient safety and healthcare worker burnout, the VA launched the Cerner system at facilities in Walla Walla and in Columbus, Ohio earlier this year.

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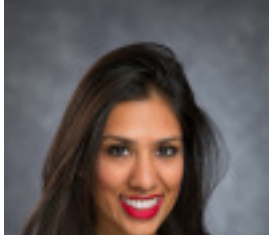
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