

Medical system is failing our veterans

EDITORIALS

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Most of us have experienced a transition in workplace technology that leads to a glitch or two, but in those cases, it is unlikely there are lives at stake. It’s a different story at the VA Ohio Healthcare System, where questions are being raised about two veterans’ deaths after a switch to a new electronic health records system.

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House Veterans Affairs Committee ranking member Mike Bost, R-Ill., and Reps. Mike Carey and Troy Balderson, both R-Ohio, have asked Department of Veterans Affairs officials to supply more information on the deaths, according to a report in the Military Times.

“*The [medical records project] has been plagued by safety risks and technical problems in addition to exorbitant costs,*” the group wrote. “These two incidents involved different combinations of system and human error. While mistakes undoubtedly happen in health care, the [new system] is clearly compounding and worsening the potential for human error.

“*It was irresponsible to subject our veterans to such a flawed and dangerous system, and the situation in Columbus and the other VA medical centers using it is unacceptable.*”

According to the Military Times, the VA only pointed to the delay of the planned deployment of the Oracle Cerner records platform “*to address challenges with the system and make sure it is functioning optimally for veterans and for VA health care personnel.*”

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In Ohio, one veteran died of complications after never having received the antibiotics he was prescribed. Another veteran missed a scheduled appointment. His records had not been properly transferred into the new system, and “*no outreach was attempted to reschedule the appointment.*” When he did show up several months later at the medical center, he was dead within a few days.

President Donald Trump initiated the 10-year, \$16 billion records overhaul in an attempt to bring veterans’ health records in line with military files. An inspector general report earlier this year found at least 148 veterans had been harmed by medical record mistakes and shortfalls since the system was implemented at initial sites in Washington state last year.

We promised the men and women who were willing to serve this country that we would take care of them. It unconscionable that bureaucrats and administrators can’t do their jobs well enough to keep veterans from worrying whether their lives might be in danger in VA care. If it takes lawmakers getting tough on the VA to force them to do right by those who served, then those lawmakers must use every tool in their arsenal.

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