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Electronic Health Records:

VA Needs to Address Data Management Challenges for New System

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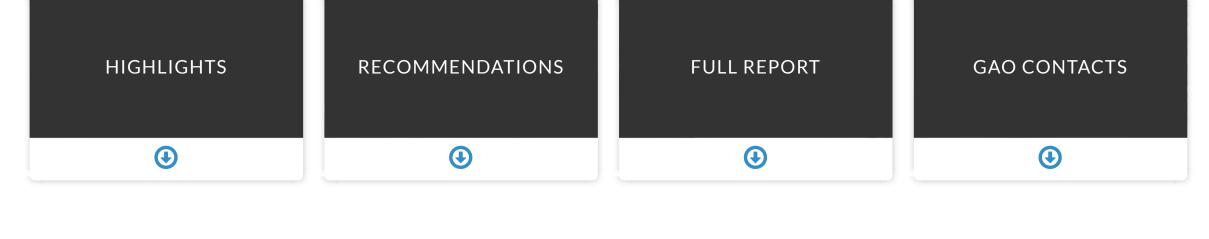












Fast Facts

patient population, and health research. VA started transferring records to a new system, which went live in October 2020. We found problems with the quality of the transferred data and with how the new system was working for some users. For example:

The Department of Veterans Affairs relies on electronic health records for patient care, risk management for its

• VA identified errors in allergy, medication, and immunization data, which may pose risks for patient safety

- meet their needs
- Our recommendations address these issues.

• VA started making reports from the new system available without consulting all users, so VA can't be sure the reports



What GAO Found

Highlights

data management activities planned for the department's EHR modernization (EHRM) include the following: • Migrating data from the legacy EHR system to the new system. • Supporting the continuity of reporting by preserving existing or delivering new reporting capabilities.

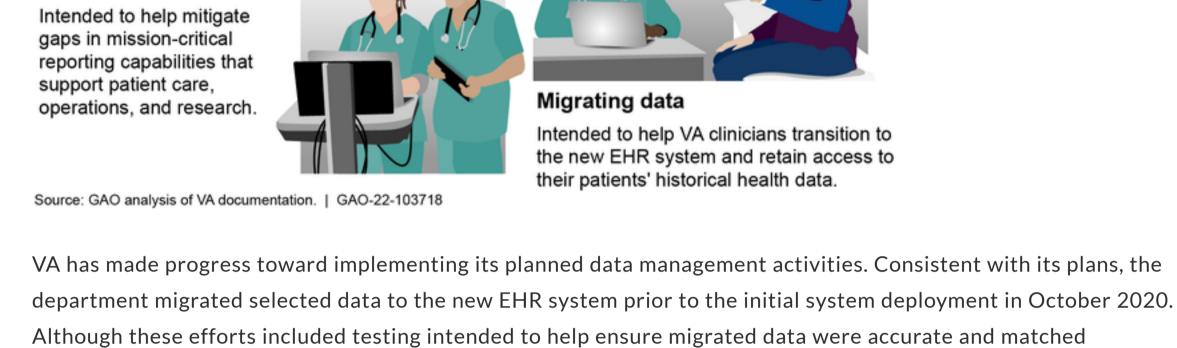
The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) relies on health data in its electronic health record (EHR) system and

Corporate Data Warehouse to support its mission. VA has undertaken an effort to replace its legacy EHR system

with a commercial system developed by Cerner Government Services, Inc. (Cerner). As shown in the figure, health

- Planned Data Management Activities Supporting the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Electronic Health Record (EHR)
- Modernization

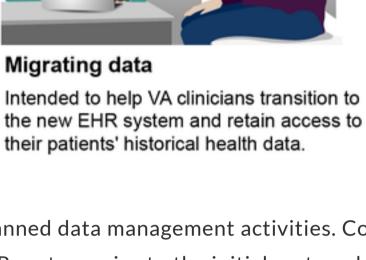
Data Management Activities



Supporting the continuity

of reporting

needs.



expected results, VA's analyses and GAO's work indicated that clinicians experienced challenges with the quality of migrated data, including their accessibility, accuracy, and appropriateness. For example, a VA report issued after the initial deployment identified risks to patient safety in the new system related to incomplete data migration. The challenges occurred, in part, because the department did not establish performance measures and goals for migrated data quality. Until VA uses such measures and goals to better ensure the quality of migrated data, the

of patient care. In addition, consistent with its plans, VA began preserving existing reporting capabilities and delivering new ones. The department also took steps to identify and engage stakeholders, including incorporating their requirements into plans for reporting continuity. Nevertheless, the department did not use a key tool known as a stakeholder register to identify and engage all key stakeholders. Consequently, certain relevant stakeholders were overlooked. By using a stakeholder register, the department would be better positioned to meet their continuity of reporting

department could deploy a new EHR system that does not meet clinicians' needs and poses risks to the continuity

measure the quality of care, among other things. GAO was asked to review VA's EHRM data management plans. The objectives of this review included describing the

Why GAO Did This Study

department's plans for (1) migrating data to the new EHR system and determining the extent to which VA has implemented its plans and (2) continuity of reporting and determining the extent to which the department has implemented its plans.

VA clinicians use health data to provide health care services to the nation's veterans. Stakeholders across the

department also rely on health data to support reporting capabilities that can help monitor patient safety and

To do so, GAO reviewed VA's plans and progress reports discussing data migration and reporting continuity for EHRM. GAO also compared these efforts to applicable federal guidance for data management and relevant project management practices. In addition, GAO interviewed knowledgeable VA officials.

GAO is making two recommendations to VA that it (1) establish and use performance measures and goals to ensure the

quality of migrated data and (2) use a stakeholder register to identify and engage all relevant EHRM stakeholders to meet

Recommendations for Executive Action

Department of Veterans Affairs

Highlights Page (1 page)

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Recommendations

Agency Affected Status Recommendation Department of Veterans Affairs The Secretary of VA should direct the Deputy Open Secretary to establish and use performance measures VA concurred and stated that the department will and goals to ensure that the quality of migrated data

Accessible PDF (58 pages)

meets stakeholder needs for accessibility, accuracy,

and appropriateness prior to future system

The Secretary of VA should direct the Deputy

deployments. (Recommendation 1)

take steps to implement this recommendation.

VA concurred and stated that the department will

take steps to implement this recommendation.

(i)

Open

Secretary to use a stakeholder register to improve the identification and engagement of all relevant EHRM stakeholders to address their reporting needs. (Recommendation 2)

Full Report

their reporting needs. VA concurred with GAO's recommendations.

GAO Contacts

Full Report (52 pages)

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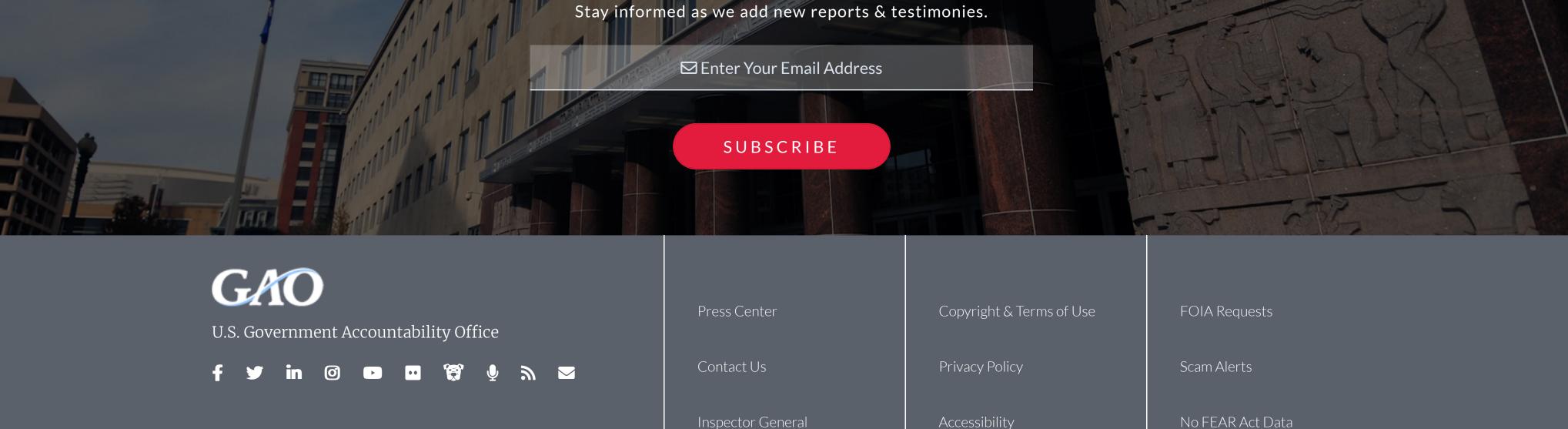
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