VA E.H.R. and DoD Health Partnership Summary

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Both the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Justice maintain Electronic Health Record systems. Since many of the patients are ultimately shared between these two departments, first while serving in the military (Department of Defense), and then later on after their service as a veteran (Veterans Affairs). What these systems do is provide and maintain patient records which can ultimately “follow” the patient throughout their service/career journey, so that way all of their relevant information is always kept on hand and up-to-date. This patient record information is available to clinicians at one facility in the network, even if it was generated in another facility, regardless if it was at the DoD or the VA. This is achieved by the facilities using electronic applications that were developed which allowed the electronic data to be transposed in seamless text form, and also in multimedia format where it’s necessary (such as images or video files).

Some of the information, besides general patient information, that is passed along this E.H.R. shared system between the DoD and VA is: admission history and data, any known allergies, consultations, health assessments related to deployment, lab orders, radiology reports, radiology reports and pharmacy data. What this data does is increase efficiency in patient care because it reduces the need for repeat tests or data to be collected if access to this data is already on-hand. With such sensitive information at stake comes great responsibility on behalf of these two departments to protect the privacy of all patients. Two critical points in patient privacy/security are a) appropriate use and b) securing the data available in these electronic records. To ensure this is properly happening, the Office of Health Information Governance regularly conducts privacy compliance assurance visits at facilities. In addition, Information and Analytics, as well as Information and Technology officials collaborate in order to put into place policies that will protect the information of patients.

Overall, this system eliminates redundancies in collecting and maintaining patient records, which would also help to eliminate discrepancies and errors in patient care provision – it provides the most up-to-date and complete medical records for patients throughout their life essentially, as after their service and affiliation with the Department of Defense has concluded, they will still be a veteran. This of course only applies to service members who have been on file since the inception of the partnership system (since the early 2000s), but future plans are to establish a Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) that would in fact follow a service member from their time in service all the way through the remainder of their life as a veteran.

References

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