



THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301-1200

HEALTH AFFAIRS

JUN 14 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR SURGEON GENERAL OF THE ARMY  
SURGEON GENERAL OF THE NAVY  
SURGEON GENERAL OF THE AIR FORCE

SUBJECT: Automated Systems of the Military Health System Usage

Since their inception, the automated systems of the Military Health System (MHS) have collected summary clinical information using idiosyncratic record formats. The resulting records are not consistent with our purchased care records or with any other external standard. Our idiosyncrasy causes us problems, in analyzing and interpreting our operations, in collecting claims from outside agencies, in benchmarking ourselves against others, and in coordinating with other Federal Agencies. Accordingly, in October, we will make an important first step in an aggressive transition to a new means of collecting electronic summary clinical information.

Beginning on October 1, 2002, the MHS will shift from capturing inpatient and outpatient clinical records to capturing institutional and professional services records. To the maximum extent possible, we will make this change using existing systems. We will use the Standard Inpatient Data Record, in its present format, as an institutional record, and we will use our Standard Ambulatory Data Record as our professional services record. This can be accomplished through the adoption of new business rules for the submission and coding of records. As quickly as possible, we will disseminate the new business rules for generating these new records.

This change in paradigm is only the first step in a several step transition aimed at eventually gathering institutional and professional services encounters using standard Medicare formats. Starting now, and continuing through the next fiscal year, we will change our data systems to produce records in the new formats. We will also alter the course of longer-range development to be consistent with our new direction.

I ask for your full support in this matter, not only for the implementation of this first step, but also for the behind-the-scenes developmental work that will make this transition a truly integrated MHS solution.

My point of contact in this matter is Dr. Richard D. Guerin of the TRICARE Management Activity. He can be reached at (703) 681-3623.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William Winkenwerder, Jr." followed by a period.

William Winkenwerder, Jr., MD