

VA & DoD Sharing of Health Information

Video Transcription – Full Video

(Time: 6:49)

MONIKA SAMTANI:

From the Washington D.C. Veterans Affairs Medical Center, I'm Monika Samtani. We're here today for an inside look at the partnership between VA and the Department of Defense in sharing electronic health information. This unique partnership has led to the development of electronic applications enabling VA and DoD clinicians access to health information from the other's facilities. These advances have had significant positive health care outcomes for Veterans and Active Duty Service Members. Dr. Ross Fletcher, the Chief of Staff for the VA DC Medical Center, will describe how VA Clinicians access DoD information. They do this through the VA computerized patient record system, CPRS. Dr. Fletcher is a nationally recognized cardiologist and renowned expert in the use of VA/DoD sharing applications.

Doctor, will you briefly explain the remote data views and VistA web information that VA Clinicians can access in CPRS?

DR. ROSS FLETCHER:

Yes, we are able to access quite a bit of information at this moment, whenever a patient comes up on our standard screen there is a button that lets us see that remote data is available. And we can use either the remote data view or VistA web to see that.

MONIKA SAMTANI:

Is the application for accessing remote data easy to use?

DR. ROSS FLETCHER:

Yes, it's relatively easy to use. You click on the button that says remote data view is available then you see a monitoring screen and one of the options is Defense Department.

If you click that and then go to reports and once again click one of the reports in the Defense Department column, you can see anything that's available such as allergies, radiology reports, pharmacy information, lab reports and consults and notes. Each one of those

tabs will bring that information to the screen and be seen simultaneously with any information that might be seen anywhere else in the VA.

MONIKA SAMTANI:

How can a clinician know whether there is or isn't remote data available for their patient?

DR. ROSS FLETCHER:

Our VA record easily lets us know that. There is a button that says "remote data available" which is grey if there's none available and turns blue if the is data available and then that button can simply be clicked and we will see where that data is.

MONIKA SAMTANI:

Is the process for accessing other VA records the same for DoD medical records?

DR. ROSS FLETCHER:

Yes, it's very much the same. We can use either VistA web or the remote data view. Both will access the records anywhere in the VA as well as DoD. DoD remains one of the sites that we can see.

MONIKA SAMTANI:

How did VA clinicians previously access this information?

DR. ROSS FLETCHER:

Well it depends on what you mean by previously, but if you mean before the electronic health record, which I have some experience in this hospital with, if we wanted information from DoD we would have to ask for the record. But the paper record was a very major impediment to being able to see any of this information.

MONIKA SAMTANI:

How long does it take to retrieve the remote information from DoD?

DR. ROSS FLETCHER:

Sometimes it's a little bit longer than the sites on the VA side but not much I'd say less than a minute is usual.

MONIKA SAMTANI:

How far back do DoD electronic records go?

DR. ROSS FLETCHER:

They go back to 1989. All the way back we can see, and generally when I access the information, when I query I say "all results" and I go back as far as those results go. It's interesting that some of the information way back is very important for us taking care of the patient at the present time.

MONIKA SAMTANI:

To access remote data, does the VA clinician need to know the dates of the patient's military services?

DR. ROSS FLETCHER:

No they don't. If they click all results if they want to confine it a bit, they might do that and they have that possibility. If they just want to look at the medications the patient has had in the past 6 months that can be clicked and it comes down quicker than hitting all results.

MONIKA SAMTANI:

Can you give us a specific example of how DoD information could improve medical treatment or even save a life?

DR. ROSS FLETCHER:

Well the interesting arena that I haven't spoken a lot of is the computable data that's available on both sides in what's known as the CHDR, which is combination of the health data repository and on the VA side and the clinical data repository on the DoD side.

For instance, if we haven't seen the patient here at this hospital we may not have asked the question about allergies, but if the doctor attempts to write a prescription for something like penicillin, the

information will immediately come on his screen. There is remote data available saying there is a penicillin allergy. So that's one way it would help. Obviously to know which specific medications is also important and the computable fields also work that same way with medication. If there's a drug-drug interaction, the medications being prescribed on the DoD side will immediately be checked against the drugs we're ordering there will be a warning that will stop us or actually alter the way we are giving medications.

MONIKA SAMTANI:

What would you say to VA clinicians who used the remote data application before and found limited information or thought it wasn't useful?

DR. ROSS FLETCHER:

More and more we're seeing a lot of data that's important for the patient. A lot of the information is electronic we are now able to see the information almost instantaneously and be able to make the right decisions for the patient.

Today any of the AHLTA notes that have been collected in the field will be available so I will see a note taken in Afghanistan, followed up by a note on the same patient when he comes to Landstuhl, Germany and the notes that are present at Walter Reed all in sequence as I try to take care of the patients here. So it's truly a remarkable and very interoperable system.

MONIKA SAMTANI:

Thank you so much Dr. Fletcher

DR. ROSS FLETCHER:

You're welcome.