

# VA Transparency Program:

## How VA Measures and Improves Health Care

- The Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the VA's Under Secretary for Health are committed to transparency – giving Americans the facts
- The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) releases the quality goals and measured performance of VA health care in order to:
  - Ensure public accountability
  - Spur constant improvements in health care delivery
- The success of this approach is reflected in our receipt of the Annual Leadership Award from the American College of Medical Quality

# VA Transparency Program:

## Detailed Data Show How VA Is Performing

- Just a like an auto dashboard shows how your car is driving –the public website is the VA’s “quality dashboard” with goals and how well VA meets them
- This is the link or web address to the VA’s quality dashboard: <http://www.hospitalcompare.va.gov>
- Quality information on the dashboard is divided into sections
  - In one section, the user can compare how well your local VA hospital cares for its veterans with congestive heart failure, heart attack and pneumonia
  - In another section, the user can track progress in the VA in reducing complications from surgery including infection, blood clots, cardiac, and respiratory problems

# VA Transparency Program:

## New Data Lead the Health Care Industry

- The VA health care system now takes another step in quality improvement and public accountability
- VA is releasing detailed quality and performance information based on patient records and aimed at goals that often exceed industry standards
  - For example, VA has set its goal for infection rate at zero – 0 % (literally perfect) – which has driven VA hospitals to achieve infection rates better than the national standard
- VA can offer this data because it has the world's best electronic health record system and because VA leadership is committed to EXCELLENCE

# VA Transparency Program:

## “LinKS” and “ASPIRE” Are Two New Public Data Sets

- In the two new data sets, the VA releases publically the most extensive measurement of any health system performance
- LinKS (“Linking Knowledge and Systems”) is a dashboard that summarizes outcomes in areas such as acute care, safety, Intensive Care and other measures
- ASPIRE is a web-based dashboard that documents quality and safety goals for all VA hospitals, plus how well our hospitals are meeting these goals

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## LinKS Provides Inpatient and Outpatient Data

- LinKS was developed by VA's Office of Quality and Safety and released for internal use in mid-2008
- The quarterly-updated data show process and outcome measures that are “risk-adjusted” (data from hospitals that handle many severe health issues are adjusted to be comparable to those that handle fewer or less severe issues)
- LinKS shows what we are measuring and how well each VA hospital is doing
  - In a simple example, we measure the percent of Veterans who get preventive treatment for deep venous thrombosis (or a clot in the leg) within 24 hours of admission to the hospital

# VA Transparency Program:

## ASPIRE Focuses on Reaching the Best Results

- The Secretary requested ASPIRE to show the goals that VA aspires to achieve over the next few years
- This quarterly-updated information was first released internally in April 2010 and uses a new scoring system different from LinkS, although it measures some of the same issues as well as many new ones
- ASPIRE sets goals that may be above other health systems but which VA believes are worth seeking in order to improve Veterans health
  - For example, our goal for Veterans age 18-85 is to have blood pressure readings less than 140/90 ... we measure the percent of Veterans at each hospital who are reaching this goal

# VA Transparency Program:

## VA Health Care Defines EXCELLENCE in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

- Many LinkS and ASPIRE goals are simply not measured in other health systems – VA is raising the bar
- Outside benchmarks are used when available, but often VA sets its own standards at a higher level
  - Hospitals more than 30% different from the goal are shown in red and those only 10% different from the goal are shown in green in ASPIRE – but a site that is red within the VA might be a good performer compared to outside counterparts
- The scoring system is designed to move VA forward
- ASPIRE is not about finding fault but about helping VA to target opportunities for improving performance

<http://www.hospitalcompare.va.gov/aspire>

