VA Connected Care: Enhancing Veteran Access and Experience

Session #135, February 21, 2017

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Speaker Introduction

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Conflict of Interest

Neil C. Evans, MD
Chief Officer, Office of Connected Care
Veterans Health Administration, *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*

Has no real or apparent conflicts of interest to report.

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Agenda

- Learning Objectives & STEPS
- Connected Care at VA
- Three Fundamentals of Approach
- Lessons Learned
- Q&A

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Learning Objectives

- Distinguish the attributes that make up an effective patient-facing digital strategy across a national/regional health enterprise
- Identify opportunities and pitfalls for provider and patient technology adoption
- Explore how patients respond to accessing information in their electronic health record (EHR) (e.g., VA Open Notes)
- Apply best practices in scaling digital technologies across a health system

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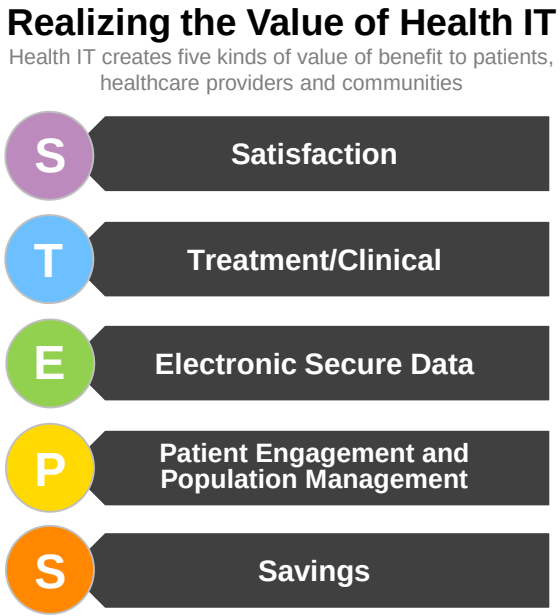
How Benefits Were Realized

- VA Connected Care has realized benefits in all STEPS areas. Key Highlights:
  - More than 12 percent of Veterans served by VA receive at least a portion of their care yearly through one of VA's telehealth modalities
  - 55.8 million visits / 502 million page views to VA's personal health portal, My Health***e***Vet, in FY16
  - Access to care, both primary and specialty care, is significantly improved across the vast geography that VA serves
  - Very high patient satisfaction levels across all VA Connected Care modalities



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Veterans Health Administration

- Largest integrated health care system in U.S.
  - 144 Medical Centers
  - 1,221 Outpatient Clinics
  - 130 Community Living Centers
  - 103 Domiciliaries
  - 300 Vet Centers
- 33% of Veteran patients live in rural America
- 21 Million Veterans living in U.S.
  - More than 9 million enrolled, 6 million receiving care
- 305,000 VHA employees

https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/Quickfacts/Stats_at_a_glance_06_04_16.PDF

myVA Transformation

> VA is undergoing a radical transformation to improve our relationship with our Veterans. This relationship is the cornerstone for all that VA does... The foundation of that relationship is built on trust and respect. It must be built to last a lifetime.
>
> -- VA Secretary Bob McDonald (2014-2016)

Five Broad Strategies

- Improving the Veteran experience
- Improving the employee experience
- Achieving support services excellence
- Establishing a culture of continuous performance improvement
- Enhancing strategic partnerships

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VA's Connected Care Strategy

Vision

Access and the Veteran experience will be enhanced by health information technologies that effectively integrate into the daily activities of Veterans and VA staff

Mission

To deliver high-quality, Veteran-centered care; optimize individual and population health; advance health care that is personalized and proactive; and enhance the health care experience through virtual modalities of care

VA Connected Care Products/Services

- **My HealtheVet**
  - Prescription Refill and Tracking
  - VA Blue Button (Download my Health Records, including VA Open Notes)
  - Veterans Health Library
  - Appointments
- **VA Mobile**
  - mobile.va.gov/appstore
  - Apps for Veterans
  - Apps for VA Staff
  - VA Beta App Store
- **Telehealth**
  - Clinical Video Telehealth, VA Video Connect
  - Store and Forward (Asynchronous) Telehealth
  - Remote Home Monitoring
  - Regional/National Telehealth Hubs
  - Tele-ICU
- **VHA Innovation**
  - Employee Innovation Competitions (2,000+ ideas in FY2016)
  - Examples: Rx Tracking, One-VA Pharmacy, E-Screening, Hearing Aid Distance Fitting Application (HADFA)

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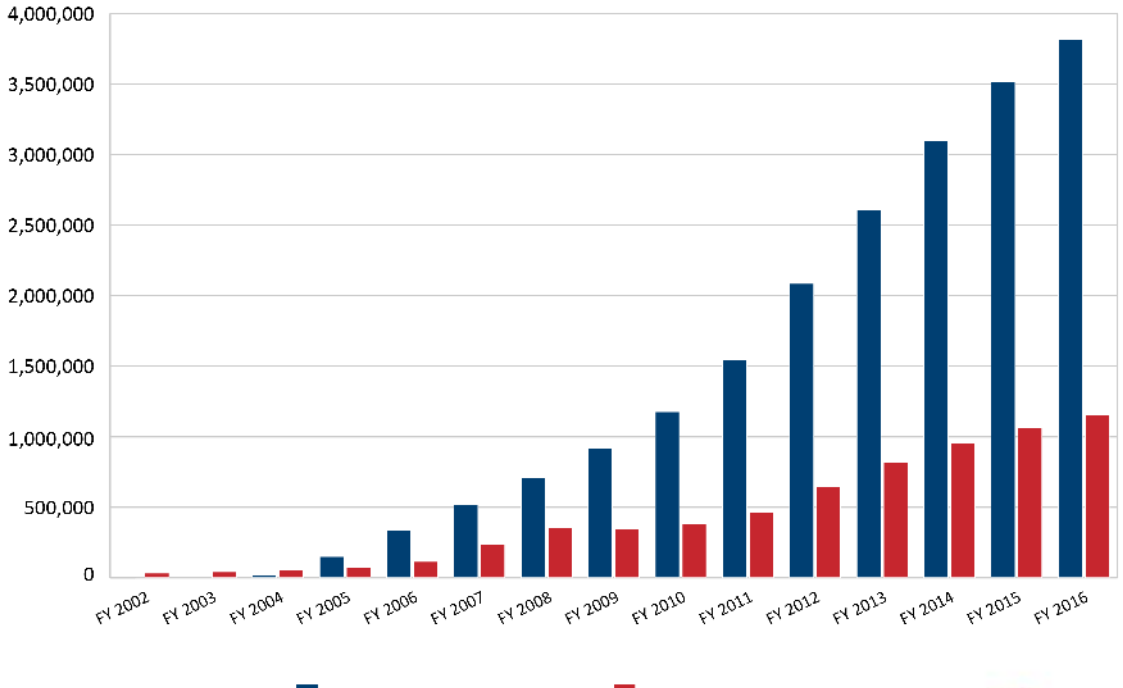
User Adoption of VA Connected Care Technologies



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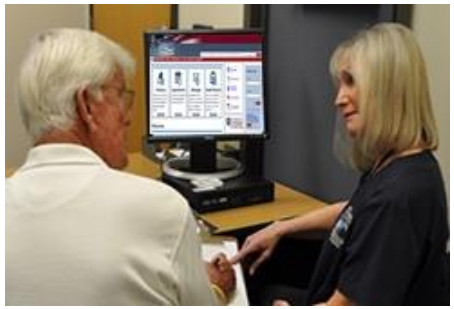
Three Fundamentals of VA's Approach

- Access to Trusted Relationships
- Access to Trusted Health Information
- Improving the Care Experience for Veterans, Caregivers and Health Care teams



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Access to Trusted Relationships

Connecting Veterans With Their VA Care Teams

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VA Telehealth Services

- 12 percent (677,000) of Veteran patients enrolled in VA care accessed through telehealth
- 2.14 million visits in FY16

- Home Telehealth: 156,000 Veterans
  - Reduction in bed days of care – 59%
  - Reduction in hospital admissions – 31%
  - Patient satisfaction – 88%
- Video Telehealth: 307,000 Veterans
  - Clinical Video Telemental Health Reduction Acute Psychiatric care – 39%
  - Patient satisfaction – 92%
- Store & Forward Telehealth: 304,000 Veterans
  - Patient satisfaction – 94%

**Statistics as of September 2016*

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Clinical Video Telehealth (>45 Clinical Specialties)

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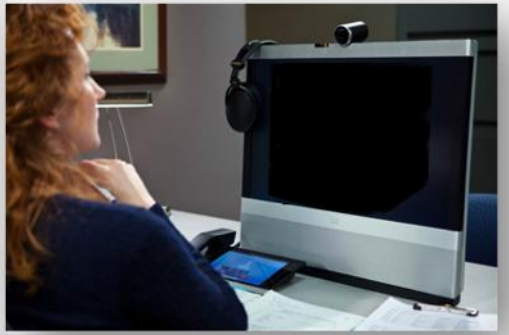

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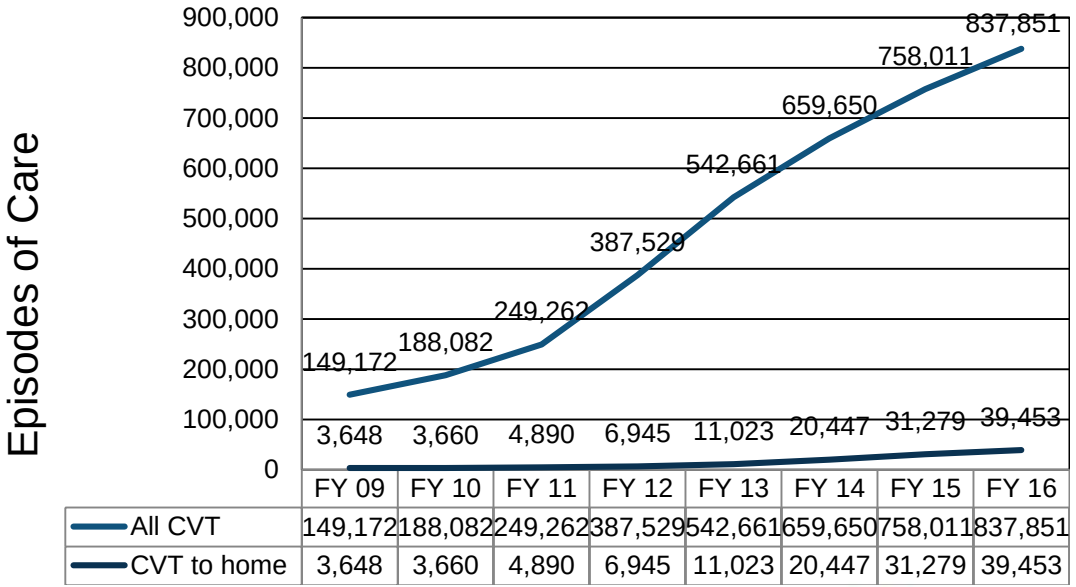
VA Video Connect

Moving Video Visits to Veterans' Personal Devices



	FY 09	FY 10	FY 11	FY 12	FY 13	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16
All CVT	149,172	188,082	249,262	387,529	542,661	659,650	758,011	837,851
CVT to home	3,648	3,660	4,890	6,945	11,023	20,447	31,279	39,453

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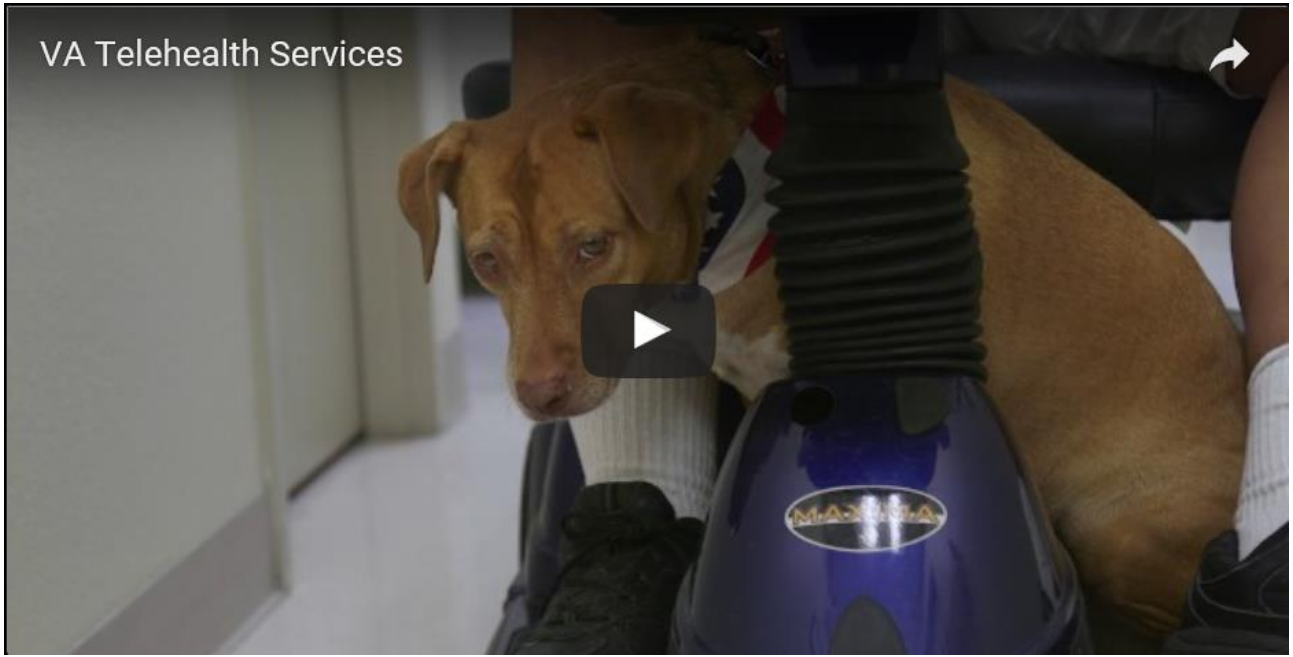
Realizing the Benefits



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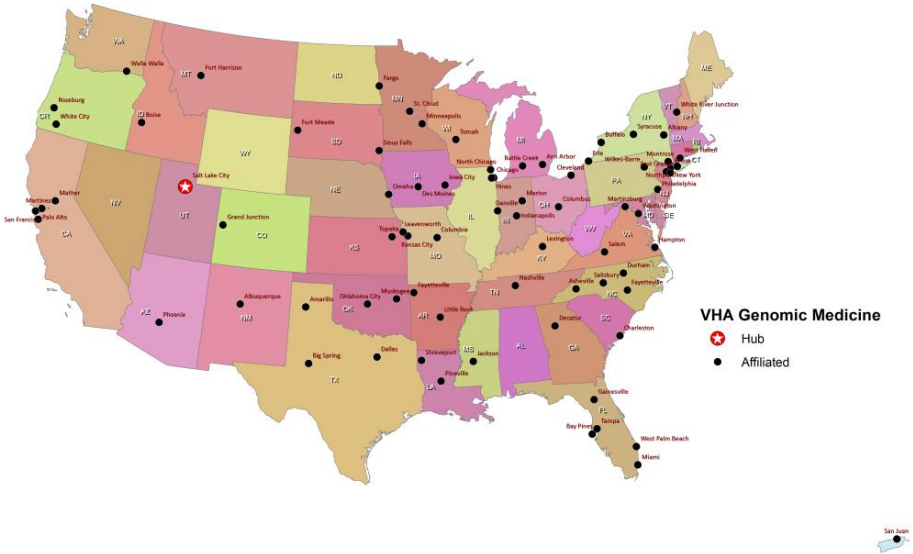
An Example: VA's Tele-Genomic Medicine Service

- Centralized Genomic Medicine and Counseling service started in 2012
- Reaches areas of the country where genetic services are generally unavailable
- Provides direct patient counseling and support to local clinicians
- Care delivered through community-based outpatient clients (CBOCs) as well as VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) to reach Veterans in their communities
- **Now reaches 80 VAMCs**



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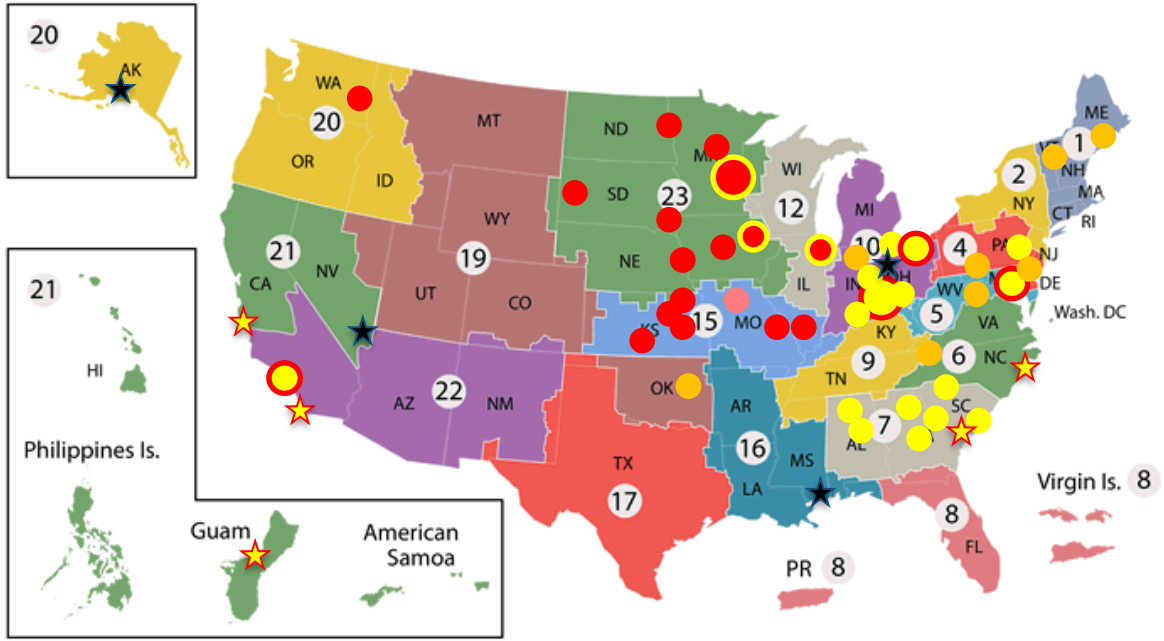
Another Example: Tele-ICU



- **Minneapolis**
- V23 Sub-Hub
- Active Affiliate
- In Development
- JIF site (USAF MTF)
- **Cincinnati**
- Sub-Hub
- Active Affiliate
- In Development
- JIF site (Navy proposed)

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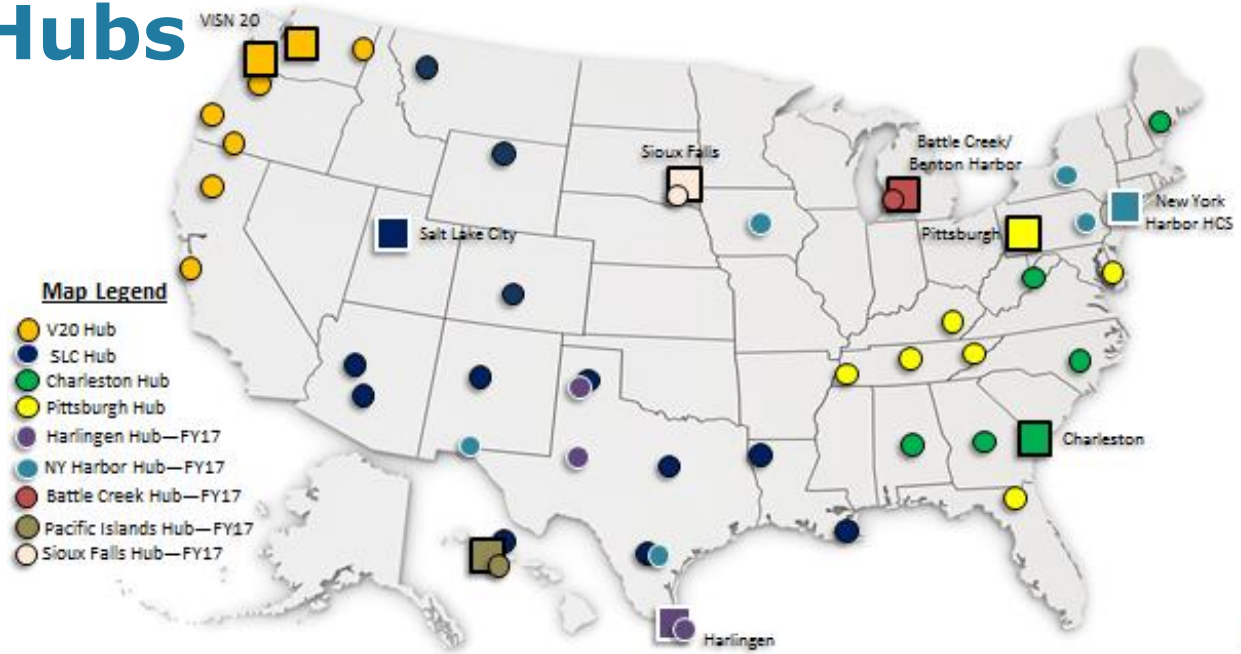
From Accessibility to System Capacity An Example: Regional Telemental Health Hubs



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My HealtheVet Secure Messaging

- Research Findings
  - Increases access and satisfaction
  - Increases convenience and efficiency
  - Enhances patient/provider relationships
  - Patients want to use with “all of their providers”
  - Timely response is critical

Nazi, KM. The Personal Health Record Paradox: Health Care Professionals’ Perspectives and the Information Ecology of Personal Health Record Systems in Organizational and Clinical Settings. J Med Internet Res 2013;15(4):e70

National	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16	Total
Unique Patient Senders	211,448	208,714	205,100	
Inbound Messages	521,196	515,145	503,241	1,539,582
Escalated Messages	25,427	23,901	22,700	72,028
% Escalated	4.90%	4.60%	4.50%	4.66%
Average Business Days to Complete	1	0	0	0.3
Total Completed Messages	520,754	514,519	501,953	1,537,226
Messages Completed by Triage Members	112,897	110,622	106,204	329,723
Messages Completed by Clinical Members	285,385	281,782	277,355	844,522
Messages Completed By Providers	122,472	122,115	118,394	362,981
Outbound Team Member Messages	571,868	555,554	509,187	1,636,609

Benefits of Secure Email

- Shimada et.al. 2013 study found that the use of secure email reduced the rate of urgent care visits in VA
- Kaiser 2010 study found that the use of secure email was associated with improvements in HEDIS measures, including HbA1c, cholesterol and blood pressure control
- Group Health Cooperative study evaluated the impact of managing depression care using secure email and found the group using secure email had > 50% lower rates of depression compared with the control
- VA studies have shown that the use of secure email improves the provider-patient relationship and improves patient engagement

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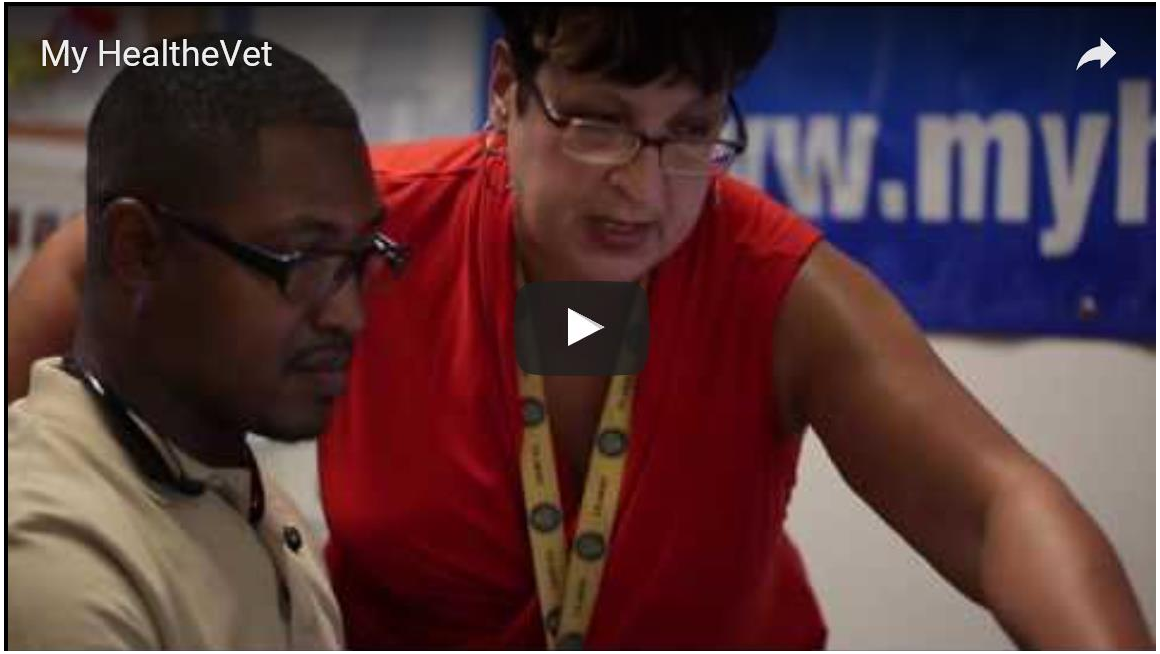
Realizing the Benefits



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Access to Trusted Health Information

Connecting Veterans With **Their** Health Information

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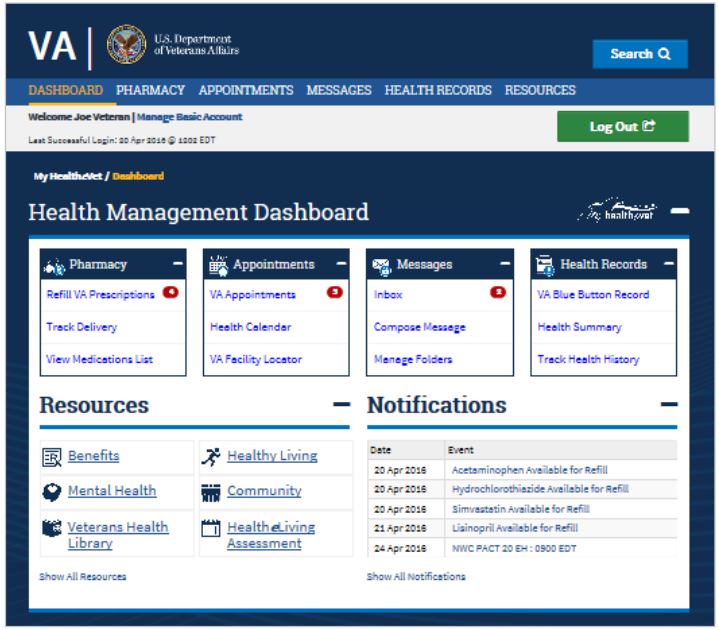
My HealtheVet



- **Registrants**: 3,817,629
- **Identity Proofed VA Patients:** 2,255,495
- **Patients Opted-in for Secure Messaging:** 1,885,724
- **Rx Refill Requests:** 14 million per year
- **VA Blue Button Download My Data:** more than 1.55 million unique users
- **Web Data:** 55.8 million visits/502 million page views in 2016
  - 40% of all of VA.gov Web traffic
  - Consistently the 4th most visited site in Federal Government

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Born in 2010

Blue Button Download My Data®

OpenNotes®

http://www.opennotes.org/

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VA Open Notes Launched in January 2013

All VA patients can access their clinical notes using the VA Blue Button on My Health***e***Vet:

- Requires a Premium (authenticated) account
- Includes primary care, specialty care, mental health, social work, nursing and Secure Messaging notes, consult result notes, and note addendums
- Notes from January 1, 2013 forward available

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VA Open Notes Experience

Nazi KM, et al. J Am Med Inform Assoc 2015;22:380–389. doi:10.1136/amiajnl-2014-003144, Research and Applications

VA OpenNotes: exploring the experiences of early patient adopters with access to clinical notes

RECEIVED 11 July 2014
REVISED 8 September 2014
ACCEPTED 6 October 2014
PUBLISHED ONLINE FIRST 28 October 2014

Kim M Nazi[1], Carolyn L Turvey[2,3], Dawn M Klein[2,3], Timothy P Hogan[4,5,6], Susan S Woods[7,8]

ABSTRACT

Objective To explore the experience of early patient adopters who accessed their clinical notes online using the Blue Button feature of the My Health*e*Vet portal.
Methods A web-based survey of VA patient portal users from June 22 to September 15, 2013.
Results 33.5% of respondents knew that clinical notes could be viewed, and nearly one in four (23.5%) said that they had viewed their notes at least once. The majority of VA Notes users agreed that accessing their notes will help them to do a better job of taking medications as prescribed (80.1%) and be better prepared for clinic visits (88.6%). Nine out of 10 users agreed that use of visit notes will help them understand their conditions better (91.8%), and better remember the plan for their care (91.9%). In contrast, 87% disagreed that VA Notes will make them worry more, and 88.4% disagreed that access to VA Notes will be more confusing than helpful. Users who had either contacted their provider or healthcare team (11.9%) or planned to (13.5%) primarily wanted to learn more about a health issue, medication, or test results (53.7%).
Conclusions Initial assessment of the patient experience within the first 9 months of availability provides evidence that patients both value and benefit from online access to clinical notes. These findings are congruent with OpenNotes study findings on a broader scale. Additional outreach and education is needed to enhance patient awareness. Healthcare professionals should author notes keeping in mind the opportunity patient access presents for enhanced communication.

About the Survey

22 JUN 2013 to 15 SEP 2013

4% random sample of website visitors who navigated 4 or more pages during their visit

N=37,103 (62% survey completion rate)

Data filtered to remove potential duplicates and focus on patients receiving VA care (N=29,191)

Research Team:
Kim Nazi, Carolyn Turvey,
Dawn Klein, Timothy Hogan,
and Susan Woods

Knowledge and Use of VA Open Notes

- 34% knew that VA Notes could be viewed
- 24% viewed their VA Notes at least once
- VA Open Notes users (N=6861):
  - were predominantly male (90%) and aged 50-79 years old (87%)
  - tended to have more education and more frequent VA use
  - tended to be more frequent My Health***e***Vet users

- VA Open Notes use was not significantly associated with gender or self-rated health status
- More than half of both users and non-users had previously requested paper medical records
- VA Open Notes users were asked additional questions about their experience

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Summary of Key Findings (VA Open Notes Users)

Patients who viewed their notes anticipated considerable benefits from having access to clinical notes similar to VA Open Notes study, including:

- doing a better job of taking medications as prescribed (80%)
- being better prepared for clinic visits (89%)
- feeling more in control of their health care (91%)
- taking better care of themselves (91%)
- understanding their conditions better (92%)
- being better able to remember the plan for their care (92%)

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Summary of Key Findings (continued)

- Although some users may not have understood all of the information contained in their notes, overall satisfaction with access to VA Open Notes was generally rated high (and significantly higher if users did understand the information)
- The majority of users reported that they felt no need to contact their provider. Those who did (or planned to) mostly wanted to learn more about a health issue, medication or test result

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VA Open Notes – Subsequent Findings

- **Use**: Veterans using VA Open Notes are still minority, but are more engaged in VA services
- **Open Notes + Secure Messaging (SM):** Accessing VA Open Notes does not seem to result in increased use of SM. But, Veterans who have increased their SM use are more likely to use VA Open Notes
- **Visits**: Accessing VA Open Notes does seem to be associated with an increase in primary care visits
- **Physician Behavior:** Veterans' access to VA Open Notes does not change documentation behavior of primary care providers

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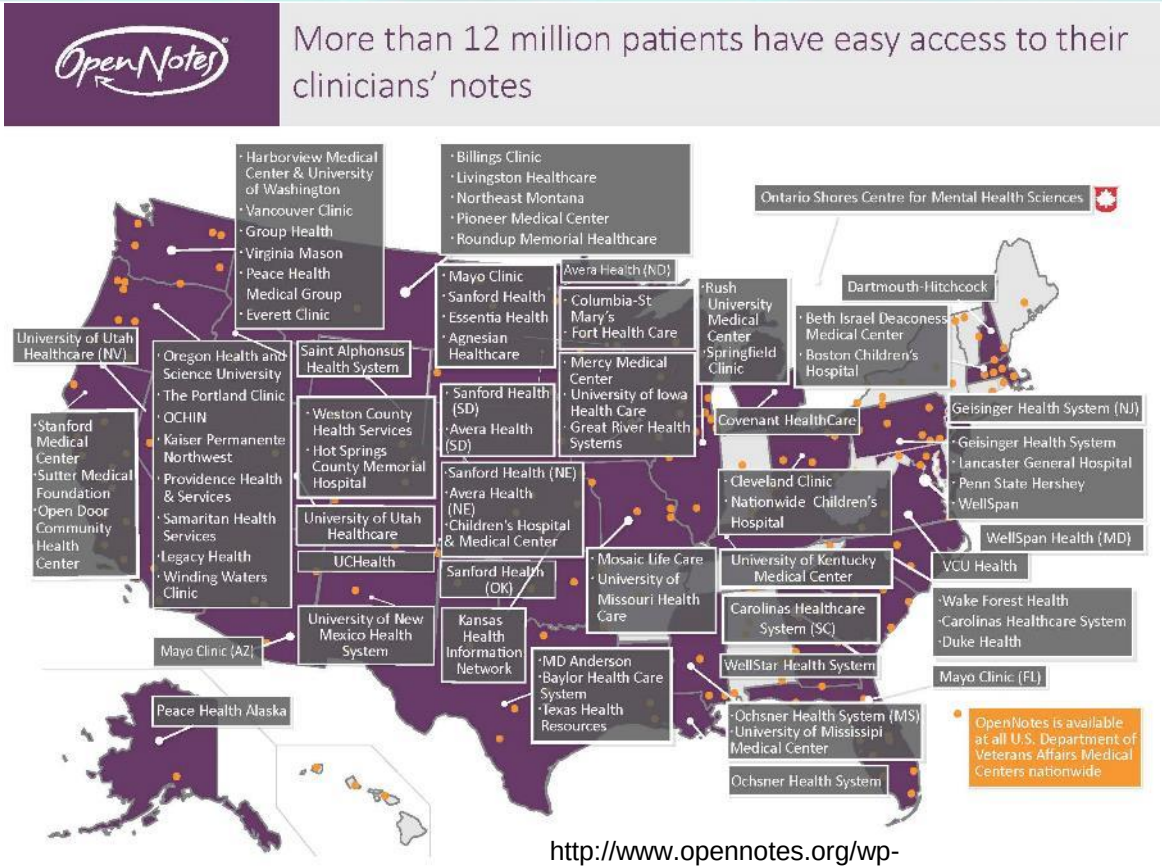
The Broader Open Notes Story



http://www.opennotes.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/12.21.16_opennotes_map.jpg

Realizing the Benefits

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Improving the Care Experience

For Veterans, Caregivers and Health Care teams

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Voice of the Veteran - Key Themes

- **Transactions** – Make it easy for me to take care of simple health-related tasks online and on my mobile device
- **Communication** – Make it easy for me to communicate with my health care team when I need to do so
- **Information Sharing** – Make it easy for me to see my health care records, give me control of my health care data, and let me share health-related data with you
- **Expert Care** – Make it easy for me to access VA expertise when and where I need it. Provide me with tools I can trust when it's my health on the line

Woods SS, *et al.* J Am Med Inform Assoc 2016;0:1-5. doi:10.1093/jamia/ocv199, Perspective

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Voice of the Provider - Key Themes

- **Workflow Integration** – Make it easy for me to deliver care virtually. Seamless electronic health record integration would be great
- **Technology** – Make it easy for me to use any VA Connected Care technologies. Set-up should be simple and training needs minimal
- **Workload / Compensation** – Connected Care (virtual care) should be valued equal to face-to-face care. Recognition of this added workload is critical
- **Patient Support** – Make it easy for the patient to get the support they need to access and use virtual care tools
- **Patient-Generated Data** – Patient-generated data is valuable and supports patient self-care, but needs to be thoughtfully integrated into workflow and care

Woods SS, *et al.* J Am Med Inform Assoc 2016;0:1-5. doi:10.1093/jamia/ocv199, Perspective

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VA Mobile

- https://mobile.va.gov/appstore
- 32 VA mobile apps
  - National Release – 21
  - Field Testing - 11
- Links to commercial apps stores and direct links to mobile and web apps
- Training materials
- App feedback

Messaging Enabled Self-Care

annie

A mobile messaging system that promotes self-care for Veterans. Annie sends regular, automated text message reminders to Veterans to help them track health information requested by their VA care teams. Annie can also can send Veterans reminders and messages from their local VA facility

Named after Lt. Annie G. Fox

First woman to receive Purple Heart for combat

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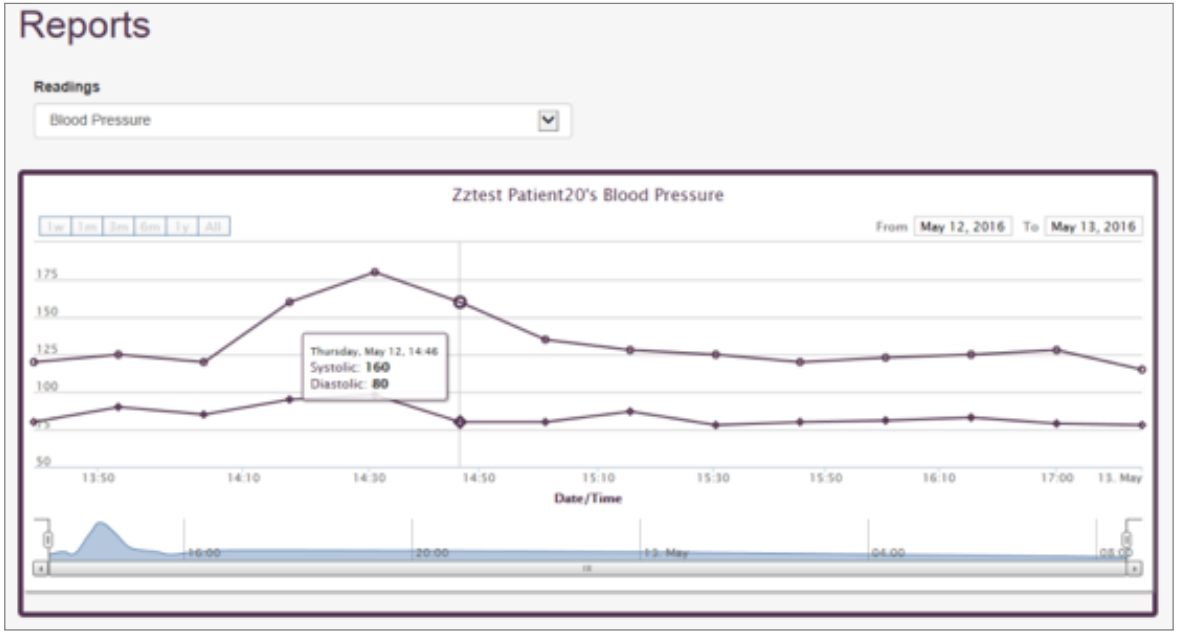
Annie PGD data is Available to the Clinical Team



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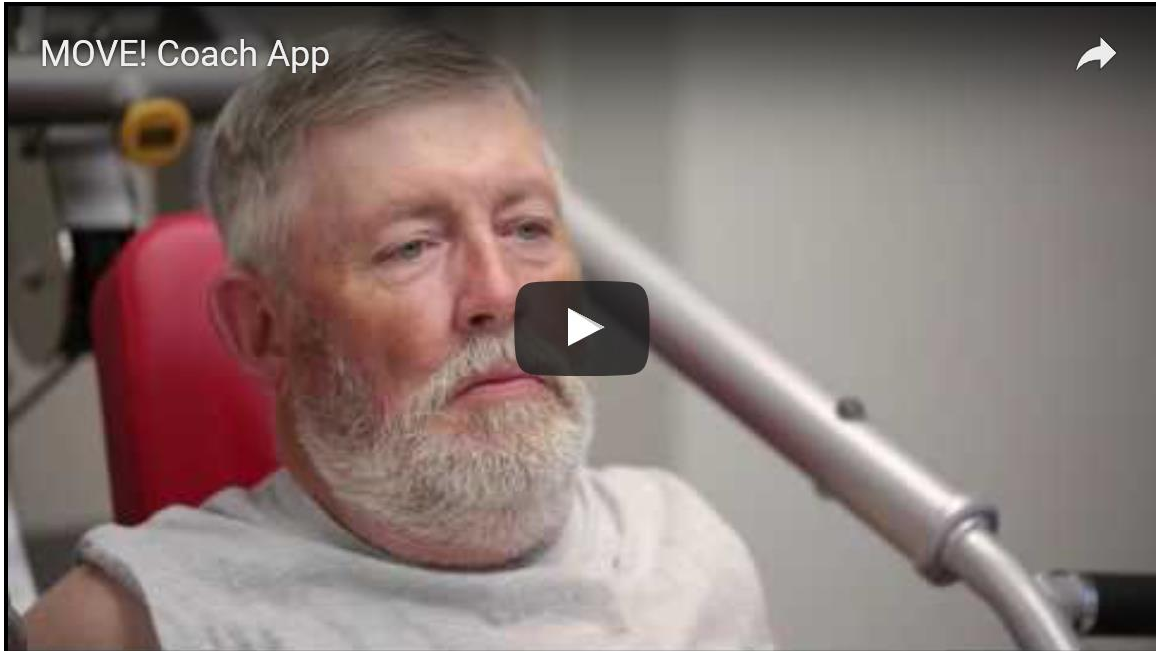
Realizing the Benefits



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Lessons Learned

- **When building an enterprise VA Connected Care program, technology should not be the primary focus**
  - Quality care
  - Ease of use
  - Workflow / life integration
  - Adequate technical support
  - Maintaining brand / reputation
  - Preserving relationship

- **Scaling requires more resources than you think**
  - Active sponsorship by your executive team
  - Clinical leadership buy-in
  - Communities of practice
  - Standardization of practice
  - Training (multi-channel)
  - Dedicated customer support, for both patients and health care teams
  - Assurance of quality
  - Perseverance and partnerships!

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Lessons Learned (continued)

- **Design for your entire patient population. Beware of the digital divide**
  - Personas can be very helpful
  - It's ok to have more than one digital solution accomplishing the same thing
  - Multiple channels (telephone, SMS, web, mobile, video, etc.)
  - Tailored user support and training

- **VA Connected Care won't market itself**
  - Recommended to a patient by a trusted staff member is by far the best option
  - Helping health care team members understand the advantages of VA Connected Care, and the convenience it affords for patients should be a primary goal
  - Be sure virtual work is adequately recognized.
  - Health care team staff members are your most capable marketing team
  - Careful user-centered design of online and mobile sites is critical

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Value of Health IT

S — **High patient satisfaction strong across Connected Care programs**

- Home Telehealth – **88%**
- Store-and-Forward Telehealth – **94%**
- Clinical Video Telehealth – **92%**
- My Health***e***Vet – Out of more than 120,000 surveys - sat score of **76 / 100**

T — **Treatment efficiencies realized for all stakeholders (patients, providers, & the health system)**

- Travel savings / Decreased barriers to access / Patient convenience
- Leveraging scale of the VA Health Care System

E — **Significant utilization by Veterans of secure access to their data – help with understanding/managing care**

- **1.4 million** VA Blue Button feature users
- **15.7 million** VA Blue Button file downloads

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Value of Health IT

P **Patient Engagement is a primary goal of all Connected Care technologies**

- **1.7 million** VA patients opted in to use Secure Messaging
- **81 million** VA prescription refills since August 2005

S **Operational, Business and other savings can be realized trough enterprise planning for connected care**

- Home Telehealth reduced bed days of care – **59%**
- Home Telehealth reduced hospital admissions – **31%**

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Questions?

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