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News Release

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Medical Journal Praises VA Electronic Health Record *VA Continues to Lead Health Care Industry*

WASHINGTON – A recent study in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine* singles out the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for its successful implementation of a comprehensive system of electronic health records.

The study's authors, led by Dr. Ashish K. Jha of Harvard University, noted that VA's use of electronic health records has significantly enhanced the quality of patient care. They also found that only 1.5 percent of U.S. hospitals have comprehensive electronic health records; adding VA hospitals to the analyses doubled that number.

"VA hospitals have used electronic health records for more than a decade with dramatic associated improvements in clinical quality," the study's authors wrote.

VA clinicians began using computerized patient records in the mid-1990s for everything from recording examinations by doctors to displaying results of lab tests and x-rays. Patient records are available 100 percent of the time to VA health care workers, compared to 60 percent when VA relied on paper records.

Dr. Michael J. Kussman, VA's under secretary for health, said VA has "one of the most comprehensive and sophisticated electronic systems" for patient records in the nation.

"VA's electronic health record system has largely eliminated errors stemming from lost or incomplete medical records, making us one of the safest systems in the health care industry," Kussman said.

The authors of the *NEJM* article are the latest to praise VA for its technology and commitment to patient safety. In 2006, VA received the prestigious "Innovations in American Government" Award from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government for its advanced electronic health records and performance measurement system.

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