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VA rolls out new patient-appointment tool, as part of electronic health record modernization transformation

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched a new appointment scheduling tool Aug. 21 at the VA Central Ohio Healthcare System to make medical visits more efficient for care providers and Veterans.

A critical component of VA's Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) effort, the Centralized Scheduling Solution (CSS) will be implemented at all VA health facilities to expedite patient-care coordination throughout the department.

"VA has delivered an enhanced scheduling system that will benefit Veterans and health care providers," said Acting VA Deputy Secretary Pamela Powers, who has oversight of VA's EHRM program. "This is another successful launch of a major milestone in the EHRM effort and will optimize Veterans' access to health care by improving appointment scheduling. CSS also provides an efficient and transparent method of identifying and eliminating double bookings, flagging canceled appointments and maximizing provider time spent with patients."

VA's current scheduling solutions require VA staff to log in to multiple software applications to coordinate calendars, clinicians, rooms and equipment. This process requires time-intensive manual data entry and workarounds to finalize appointments. CSS will address these challenges by providing an "all-in-one" appointment management solution that offers scheduling by resource (e.g., clinician, room, equipment), simple color-coded time slots and a single view for coordinating schedules across multiple locations.

Through EHRM, VA will move from using its existing electronic health record (EHR) system, the software that stores patient information and tracks all aspects of Veteran care, to a new EHR solution that is interoperable with the Department of Defense (DOD) system. Initial EHR rollout at VA sites will start in fall 2020.

Upon full implementation at all sites, the new EHR will unify all VA health care facilities into one system linked with DOD. This modernization effort will create a comprehensive health record to provide seamless care for service members and Veterans. Visit VA's EHRM program and CSS for more information.

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