



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 22, 2018

Nine VA Programs Receive Awards for Innovation in Health IT

From customer care to genetic testing, initiatives focus on improving the Veteran experience

WASHINGTON — Nine U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) programs were recently recognized for outstanding innovations in federal health technology at an awards ceremony at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

With initiatives ranging from a mobile app for scheduling medical appointments to a customer-experience analysis system, VA's programs were among 26 winners honored earlier this month at the fourth annual [FedHealthIT Innovation Awards](#).

"Listening to Veterans and their families, as well as their caregivers, is absolutely critical to VA as we constantly evaluate our processes to achieve the best health care outcomes," said Acting VA Secretary Peter O'Rourke. "Awards like this, which recognize VA's leadership in IT innovation, affirm our commitment to leadership and excellence in serving our nation's Veterans."

The nine VA programs receiving awards include:

- **Substance Use Disorder Treatment**, from the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) [Center for Compassionate Care Innovation](#), will provide increased access to care for up to 1,000 patients diagnosed with alcohol and opiate addiction, who have limited access to care in the VHA system.
- **The Genetic Diagnostic Testing (GDx) System**, from VA's Office of Connected Care, is a mobile application giving Veterans and VA providers unprecedented access to genetic laboratory test results, allowing viewing and sharing results with health-care providers inside and outside VA. Medical professionals will be able to provide highly individualized care and better treat their patients.
- **The Clinical Decision Support (CDS) Content and HL7-compliant Knowledge Artifacts (KNARTs)** from VA's Office of Health Informatics-Knowledge Based Systems, supports VA's health-care community standardizing clinical content by organizing knowledge and logic in a way that is universally shareable via any clinical decision support tool, electronic health record or internet technology (IT) platform — ultimately improving clinicians' ability to deliver patient care and improving the referral process.
- **My HealtheVet (MHV) Core Development** allows the community of 4.3 million MHV users to better use the online scheduling app. This optimized the use of VA IT investment funds, allowed access across desktops, tablets and mobile devices and dramatically increased Veteran use of the application.
- **Customer Experience (CX) Data Capability**, a program created to collect and analyze Veterans' experiences as they engage with VA. Using newly developed software, Veterans can provide feedback and suggest improvements for VHA facilities. The facilities can access the feedback in real time, enabling immediate service recovery and long-term program and system improvements. These improvements led to [Forrester's Customer Experience Index](#) recognizing VA for significant improvements in how the department engages with its Veteran customers and other stakeholders over the past year.
- **VHA's Diffusion of Excellence Initiative** empowers frontline employees to solve some of VHA's toughest challenges. Using a "Shark Tank"-style competition — similar to the television show where entrepreneurs compete for support from investors — promising practices have been implemented more than 400 times in VA medical centers, impacting an estimated 96,450 Veterans.
- **The Remote Veterans Apnea Management Platform (REVAMP)**, in VA's Office of Connected Care, improves Veterans' access to care, reduces patient wait times and allows Veterans with sleep apnea to be diagnosed and treated without having to travel to a sleep center. This VA-developed web platform facilitates remote care and provides a convenient alternative to current in-person management.
- **Mobile Scheduling Enhancements (MSE)**, in VA's Office of Information and Technology's Enterprise Program Management Office, uses apps to enable Veterans, VA clinics and staff to self-schedule primary care, audiology, optometry and mental health appointments within VA's health-care system. Since the November 2017 release of the online scheduling app, transactions conducted by Veterans have increased more than 3,000 percent.
- **The System of Logical Representation (SOLOR)** uses off-the-shelf software to convert complex language into user-friendly terminologies. This simplification represents a shift in how software developers consume terminology, and enables collaborative improvement in medical knowledge, patient care and patient safety.

"This award showcases VA's alignment to the President's Management Agenda and the Customer Experience Cross-Agency Priority goal of improving customer experience with federal services," said Dr. Lynda Davis, who leads VA's Veterans Experience Office, which was honored with an award for its use of the Customer Experience Data Capability. "The award demonstrates why VA is a leader in this space. It also solidifies the work being performed under this program as an innovative approach to deliver real results in support of the VA's mission."