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VA and DOD senior leaders commit to aligned electronic health records system rollout

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Secretaries of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Defense (DOD) signed a [joint statement](#) Sept. 26 pledging that their two departments will align their plans, strategies and structures as they roll out a new electronic health records (EHR) system that will allow VA and DOD to share patient data seamlessly.

Signed by Defense Secretary James N. Mattis and VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, the joint statement reinforces both departments' commitment to ensuring the successful transition from a legacy patient-data system to a modernized one that will continue to support active-duty service members, Veterans and their families.

"The joint statement between DOD and VA represents tangible evidence of our commitment to change how we deliver Veteran-focused, provider-friendly care," Wilkie said. "The new EHR system will be interoperable with DOD, while also improving VA's ability to collaborate and share information with community care providers. This will ease the burden on service members as they transition from military careers and will be supported by multiple medical providers throughout their lives."

VA signed a contract with Cerner Corp. May 17 to replace VA's 40-year-old legacy Veterans Integrated System Technology Architecture (Vista) health care records technology over the next 10 years with the new Cerner system, which is in the pilot phase at DOD. Collaborating with DOD will ensure that VA: understands the challenges encountered as DOD deploys its EHR system called Military Health System GENESIS (MHS GENESIS); adapts an approach by applying lessons learned to anticipate and mitigate known issues; assesses prospective efficiencies to help deploy faster; and delivers an EHR that is fully interoperable.

"We are committed to partnering with the VA to support the lifetime care of our service members, Veterans and their families," Mattis said. "This modern electronic health record will ensure those who serve our nation have quality health care as they transition from service member to Veteran."

"The EHR will give health care providers a full picture of patient medical history, driving better clinical outcomes," Wilkie said. "It will also help us identify Veterans proactively who are at higher risk for issues, such as opioid addiction and suicide, so health care providers can intervene earlier and save lives."

For more information about VA's Office of Electronic Health Record Modernization, go to www.ehrm.va.gov.

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