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Federal electronic health record connects with more community partners

Addition of new health care network enhances patient care

WASHINGTON — The Federal Electronic Health Record Modernization (FEHRM) program office announced the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) expanded their joint health information exchange (HIE) network with the private sector, Oct. 9, after connecting with the CommonWell Health Alliance.

CommonWell brings a nationwide network of more than 15,000 hospitals and clinics to the 46,000 community partners already part of the joint HIE.

Launched earlier this year, the joint HIE is a modernized health data sharing capability that enhances the ability of VA, DOD and USCG to quickly and securely share electronic health record (EHR) data bidirectionally with participating community health care providers. The result provides more informed care for patients who are navigating between different health care providers.

"The CommonWell connection means VA, DOD, and USCG providers can access more information about their patients to make the best care decisions," said FEHRM Director William Tinston,. "The FEHRM drives federal capabilities, such as the expanded joint HIE to improve health care delivery, regardless of where patients get care."

Through the joint HIE, providers may access information on their patients' prescriptions, allergies, illnesses, lab and radiology results, immunizations, past medical procedures and medical notes.

"As a clinician who is using the joint HIE, the more patient information I have access to, the more I can understand the full picture of my patient's care and better meet their needs," saidVA primary care physician and clinical leader with the FEHRM Dr. Neil Evans. "During the COVID-19 pandemic, efficient electronic health information sharing is more important than ever."

The joint HIE's integration with the CommonWell network of providers is part of the overarching effort within VA, DOD and USCG to modernize and deploy a single, common federal EHR. By implementing the same EHR —VA, DOD and USCG can better document care from the time individuals enter the military through their care as Veterans, including care they may receive in the private sector — viewable through the joint HIE.

The joint HIE honors patient consent. Health records of patients who opt out of sharing will not be exchanged through the joint HIE.

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