

**TIMELY SCHEDULING OF SURGICAL PROCEDURES
IN THE OPERATING ROOM**

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive describes the timely use of the electronic health record (EHR) surgery platform for scheduling a surgical procedure to be performed in an operating room (OR) at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities with an approved VHA Surgical Program.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS: This Directive defines the policy and responsibilities for scheduling a surgical procedure to be performed in an OR at a VA medical facility with an approved VHA Surgery Program. An amendment, dated October 15, 2020, updates content to reflect the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA's) transition to a new EHR and enable implementation of this directive at VA medical facilities using Cerner Millennium. Through the directive, references to Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA) Surgery Package have been replaced with EHR surgery platform. References to Surgery Quality and Workflow Manager (SQWM) software have been removed.

3. RELATED ISSUES: VHA Directive 2010-018, VHA Directive 2011-037, and VHA Handbook 1102.01.

4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The National Surgery Office (10NC2) is responsible for the content of this VHA Directive. Questions may be directed to the National Director of Surgery at 202-461-7130.

5. RESCISSIONS: Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management (10N) Memorandum, Process for Scheduling a Surgical Procedure in the Operating Room, dated June 3, 2013, is rescinded.

6. RECERTIFICATION: This VHA Directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of November, 2019.

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**TIMELY SCHEDULING OF SURGICAL PROCEDURES
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1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive describes the timely use of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) electronic health record (EHR) surgery platforms for scheduling a surgical procedure to be performed in an operating room (OR) at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities with an approved VHA Surgical Program.

AUTHORITY: 38 U.S.C. 7301(b).

2. BACKGROUND:

a. The EHR surgery platform must be used to schedule a surgical procedure to be performed in an OR at a VA medical facility with an approved VHA Surgery Program, whether an In-Patient Surgery Program or an Ambulatory Surgery Center.

b. The use of EHR surgery platforms to schedule a surgical procedure on a specific date, must document a time/date stamp of the scheduling action.

c. On June 3, 2013, the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management published a memorandum to the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Directors that established the following:

(1) An expectation that all surgical procedures performed in an OR would be scheduled in the EHR surgery platforms at the appropriate time. Specifically, the request to perform a surgical procedure is entered into the EHR surgery platforms on the date that both surgeon and the patient agree a surgical procedure is indicated. Scheduling a patient for a surgical procedure must follow performance and evaluation of indicated testing (e.g., cardiac catheterization) or medical consultations, but should not be delayed for routine preoperative testing or anesthesia evaluation.

(2) An understanding that all patients waiting for a surgical procedure are captured in the EHR surgery platforms, and not on any other electronic or physical list.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that its EHR surgery platforms must be utilized in accordance with this Directive to schedule a surgical procedure to be performed in an OR at a VA medical facility with an approved VHA Surgery Program.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. **National Director of Surgery.** The National Director of Surgery is responsible for monitoring NSO reporting of overall VHA Surgery Program surgical procedure wait times beginning fiscal year (FY) 2015.

b. **Veterans Integrated Service Network Director.** The VISN Director is responsible for ensuring that VA medical facilities with an approved VHA Surgery Program within their VISN comply with this policy.

c. **Veterans Integrated Service Network Chief Surgical Consultant.** The VISN Chief Surgical Consultant is responsible for the following:

- (1) Confirming that current surgical practice is in compliance with this policy, and
- (2) Ensuring a regular review (no less than quarterly) of NSO reporting of surgical procedure wait times for each approved VHA Surgery Program within their VISN.

d. **VA Medical Facility Chief of Staff.** The VA medical facility Chief of Staff with an approved VHA Surgery Program must ensure the following:

- (1) All provider and ancillary staff engaged in the scheduling of surgical procedures in the OR receive a copy of this policy, and
- (2) All surgical procedures performed in the OR are scheduled in the following manner:
 - (a) The EHR surgery platform is utilized to schedule (or request to schedule) a surgical procedure on the date that both surgeon and the patient agree a surgical procedure is indicated and all patient specific pre-operative testing (e.g., cardiac catheterization) or medical consultations have been completed, and
 - (b) No other electronic or physical list is utilized for the purpose of tracking a patient who has completed all but routine preoperative anesthesia evaluation or testing and is awaiting an OR date and performance of a surgical procedure.

***NOTE:** Any patient that is entered into the EHR surgery platform whose clinical condition later significantly changes or who requires additional work-up upon completion of routine preoperative testing or anesthesia evaluation may be cancelled from the EHR surgery platform and scheduled at a later date with knowledge and agreement of the surgeon and the patient.*

5. REFERENCES:

- a. 38 U.S.C. 7301(b).
- b. VHA Directive 2010-018, Facility Infrastructure Requirements to Perform Standard, Intermediate, or Complex Surgical Procedures.
- c. VHA Directive 2011-037, Facility Infrastructure Requirements to Perform Invasive Procedures in an Ambulatory Surgery Center.
- d. VHA Handbook 1102.01, National Surgery Office.
- e. Surgery V.3.0 Technical Manual/Security Guide available at: <http://www.va.gov/vdl/application.asp?appid=103>.

6. DEFINITIONS:

- a. **Electronic Health Record.** Electronic health record (EHR) is the digital collection of patient health information resulting from clinical patient care, medical testing, and other care-related activities. Authorized VA health care providers may access EHR to facilitate and document medical care. EHR comprises existing and forthcoming VA software including Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS), Veterans Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA), and Cerner platforms. NOTE: The purpose of this definition is to adopt a short, general term (EHR) to use in VHA national policy in place of software-specific terms while VA transitions platforms.
- b. **Operating Room.** An operating room (OR) meets the space design criteria established by the Office of Construction and Facility Management, is located in an inpatient surgical suite or ambulatory surgery center, and is supported by the OR nursing staff. For the purpose of this policy, an OR also includes a procedure room located outside of the inpatient surgical suite or ambulatory surgery center (examples: interventional radiology, cystoscopy suite) if routinely supported by the operating room nursing staff.
- c. **Surgical Procedure.** A surgical procedure is a surgical or invasive diagnostic procedure performed by qualified providers in an inpatient surgical suite or ambulatory surgery center supported by OR nursing staff. This definition includes surgical or invasive diagnostic procedures performed outside of the surgical suite (examples: interventional radiology, cystoscopy suite, procedure room) if routinely supported by operating room nursing staff.
- d. **Surgical Procedure Wait Time.** The Surgical Procedure Wait Time is defined as the number of days from the date on which the EHR surgery platform was utilized to schedule (or request to schedule) a surgical procedure to the date on which the surgical procedure was performed.