



VETERANS AFFAIRS AND KAISER PERMANENTE SHARE ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION TO IMPROVE CARE FOR VETERANS

Safe and Convenient Exchange of Medical Data

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The [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#) and Kaiser Permanente recently launched a [pilot medical data exchange program](#) in San Diego using the [Nationwide Health Information Network](#). This innovative pilot enables clinicians from VA and Kaiser Permanente to obtain a more comprehensive view of a patient's health using [electronic health record](#) information, including information about health issues, medications, and allergies.

"The Department of Veterans Affairs and the entire administration are encouraged by the opportunities that electronic health record interoperability provides for veterans, service members and their dependents," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs [Eric K. Shinseki](#). "We are proud to join in this effort with Kaiser Permanente and to achieve the benefits of health data exchange, including improved quality, patient safety, and efficiency."

Led by the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#), the NHIN provides a technology "gateway" to support interoperability standards and a legal framework for the secure exchange of health information between treating physicians, when authorized by a patient. Clinicians from the participating organizations can electronically, securely, and privately share authorized patient data, ensuring around-the-clock access to critical health information. This immediate electronic access supports increased accuracy, efficiency and safety. It also helps to avoid redundant care and testing.

The new pilot program connects VA's [Vista](#) (Veterans Affairs Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture) and [Kaiser Permanente HealthConnect](#)®. VA beneficiaries and Kaiser Permanente members in the San Diego area were the first to be offered the opportunity to sign up for the pilot, with the understanding that their information would not be shared without their consent. The program's next phase will add authorized data from the U.S. Department of Defense's health care system to this exchange in early 2010. Ultimately, this program is planned to be made available to all veterans and service members.

"Instant access to critical health data can greatly improve not only the care and service for individual patients, but also reduce redundancy and waste in health care, saving precious resources for care delivery," said John Mattison, MD, assistant medical director and chief medical information officer, Kaiser Permanente Southern California. "Enhanced patient safety, efficiency, convenience and doctor-patient communication all can be facilitated by health care information technology, and we have developed a secure and private way to exchange the information caregivers need that we hope will become a model for interoperability in health care."

Since more than half of America's veterans and active duty service members receive some portion of their health care outside of VA or DOD facilities, interoperability between federal agencies and the private sector is essential to provide the best care for veterans, service members, and their dependents.

With the new health data exchange capability, when a veteran visits a clinician, prior history data will be available instantly to help guide the best possible treatment in any location that participates in this program. Prior to this project, patients frequently consented to sharing this information; however, it regularly took weeks or even months to receive paper health care documents. Now, this information can be transmitted electronically, within seconds.

A national effort is underway to promote the use of EHRs. Similar to financial institutions securely and seamlessly sharing customer information from different locations and systems, EHRs from different systems can safely, securely and privately provide access to health data from multiple sites of care.



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