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## Mobilizing VistA

### Introduction

The Veterans Administration (VA) leads many commercial and private healthcare organizations in the use of an effective Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system. The Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture, or VistA, is one of the most widely used EMRs in the world today as it is employed by more than 600 VA Medical Centers (VAMCs), 800 clinics, and 130+ nursing homes. Furthermore, because of its public domain status, VistA has become the de facto open-source EMR solution for the healthcare industry and holds great promise to extend broadly throughout commercial markets within the United States as well as internationally.

Since 1997, the Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS) has provided a key graphical user interface to VistA which has greatly enhanced its clinical usability. Other critical enhancements to VistA include computerized physician order entry (CPOE), bar-code medication administration, electronic prescribing and integrated clinical guidelines.

### The Challenge

Despite key system enhancements, neither VistA nor CPRS supports direct mobile or bedside interactivity. As such, significant time and effort is required for care providers to first document encounters at the bedside, and then to later enter those notes into VistA through a desktop PC running CPRS.

The care process is currently interrupted and slowed each day as providers first review patient records, and then take needed treatment action for the patient. Furthermore, because care-givers cannot directly access up-to-the-minute data within VistA from the bedside, they frequently rely on "dated" short-hand notes that were transcribed prior to rounds as reference to support crucial care-related decisions. These transcribed notes are susceptible to increased risk of inaccuracy (related to both potential transcription errors and outdated information) which, in turn, increases patient safety risks. Additionally, patient information currently transported on paper notes presents an increased risk of compromise to patient confidentiality. Finally, care is frequently interrupted as patients wait for providers to return to a desktop workstation to perform follow-on steps in the treatment cycle.

Few if any tools exist that directly interface with VistA to perform these critical tasks in an efficient yet safe manner.

### The Solution

In July of 2006, WJB Dorn VAMC (Columbia, SC) engaged in a pilot project implementing PocketMD's (PMD) Mobile Electronic Health Record (EHR) System. The goal of this project was to evaluate the effectiveness of the PMD Mobile EHR to improve workflow, efficiency, and accuracy in the hospital by:

- 1 Allowing providers to easily gain access to patient data at the point of care (including patient data that was not available when inpatient rounds began);
- 2 Providing a mobility tool that offers caregivers complete patient information as a reference at the point of care for use in decision-making during the patient treatment process; and
- 3 Giving providers the tools to complete the treatment process while at the patient bedside, including order entry.

From September 2006 through May 2007, WJB Dorn VAMC gradually rolled out an expanded list of functionality to its core test group of clinicians, beginning initially with "read-only" access to patients' records and growing to include full order entry, including support of medication, laboratory, and radiology orders. The pilot was formally concluded in May 2007, and is scheduled for expansion throughout WJB Dorn VAMC as well as additional sites within VISN 7.

### The Benefits

- Reduced daily rounding time by 30 to 90 minutes per provider.
- Streamlined care; patients proceed through the care plan with minimal delays and ultimately shorter length of stays.
- Clinical decisions are made with the most current information available.
- System downtime has less effect on patient care because providers retain patient information on their handheld devices.
- Patient records are kept safe and secure as information is protected through wireless transmission. Information is also protected on the device through file encryption and device password security.

### PARTNERS



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