VA Telehealth Services

As one of the the nation's largest health care systems, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) uses a wide variety of technologies to ensure excellence in care delivery. New technologies are revolutionizing health care and VA is recognized as a world leader in the development and use of telehealth. Telehealth services are mission-critical to the future direction of VA's Veterans Health Administration (VHA) care for Veterans.

Telehealth increases access to high quality health care services by utilizing information and telecommunication technologies to provide health care services when the patient and practitioner are separated by geographical distance. VA is committed to increasing access to care for Veterans, and has placed special emphasis on those in rural and remote locations.

Telehealth is Transformational. Telehealth is one of VA's major transformational initiatives aimed at ensuring care is convenient, accessible and patient-centered. In Fiscal Year (FY 2017), about 12 percent of Veterans received elements of their care via telehealth.

- Telehealth provides mission-critical services that help Veterans to live independently in their own homes and local communities.
- VA providers and patients discuss and decide together which telehealth care services are available in their location and clinically appropriate for the patient to opt into. Veterans can elect to have traditional in-person care instead of telehealth.

Telehealth is Robust and Sustainable. Telehealth is an effective and convenient way for patients to receive, and clinicians to provide VA care. VA has implemented national quality, implementation and development resources that support delivery of telehealth services at more than 900 locations.

Telehealth is Visionary. Telehealth in VA is the forerunner of a wider connected health vision in which patients can engage with their health care system when, and from where, they chose. The high levels of patient satisfaction and positive clinical outcomes attest to the program's success.

VA Telehealth by the Numbers FY 2017

- The number of Veterans receiving care via telehealth services grew approximately 3.6 percent in FY17; growth in Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) was more than 9 percent.
- VHA provided care to more than 727,000 patients via the three telehealth modalities. This amounted to over 2.18 million telehealth episodes of care.
- Forty-five percent of these Veterans lived in rural areas, and may otherwise have had limited access to VA health care. *(over)*

VA Telehealth Modalities

Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) is defined as the use of real-time interactive video conferencing, sometimes with supportive peripheral technologies, to assess, treat and provide care to a patient remotely. Typically CVT links the patient(s) at a clinic to the provider(s) at another location. CVT can also provide video connectivity between a provider and a patient at home or other non-VA location. CVT encompasses more than 50 clinical applications in VA such as specialty and primary care.

Home Telehealth (HT) is defined as a program into which Veterans are enrolled that applies care and case management principles to coordinate care using health informatics, disease management and technologies such as in-home and mobile monitoring, messaging and/or video technologies. The goal of Home Telehealth is to improve clinical outcomes and access to care while reducing complications, hospitalizations, and clinic or emergency room visits for Veterans in post-acute care settings, high-risk Veterans with chronic disease, or Veterans at risk for placement in long-term care.

Store-and-Forward Telehealth (SFT) is generally defined as the use of technologies to asynchronously acquire and store clinical information (e.g. data, image, sound and video) that is then forwarded to or retrieved by a provider at another location for clinical evaluation. VA's national Store-and-Forward Telehealth programs operationalize this definition to cover services that provide this care using a clinical consult pathway and a defined information technology platform that communicates the event/encounter between providers and enablesdocumentation of the event/encounter and the associated clinical evaluation within the patient record.

Veteran Enrollment in Telehealth

- Telehealth has been implemented in over 900 sites of care.
- Providers and patients agree on suitability for Telehealth.
- Veterans can opt to have traditional in-person care instead of telehealth.
- Telehealth is available for over 50 specialty areas of care.

Telehealth by Modality

Veterans accessed VA care through one (or more) of VA telehealth types in FY17

- More than 336,000 Veterans used Clinical Video Telehealth
- More than 306,000 Veterans used Store and Forward Telehealth
- More than 145,000 Veterans were enrolled in Home Telehealth

Training for Physicians and other Clinicians

- In FY2017, 42, 383 training sessions were completed, where more than 11, 600 staff attended at least one training session. VA conducts annual competency testing.
- Management of telehealth training for VA staff is virtual.

VA Telehealth Regional/National Hubs

Enables VA to hire providers in urban areas to serve areas with fewer providers:

- Ten TeleMental hubs provide video mental health appointments. (Locations: Pittsburgh, PA; Charleston, SC; Salt Lake City, UT; the Pacific Northwest, New York, NY; West Haven CT; Honolulu, HI; Sioux Falls, SD; Battle Creek, MI; and Harlingen, TX)
- Eight VA TelePrimary Care Hubs support delivery of primary care. (Locations: Boise, ID; Little Rock, AR; San Francisco, CA; Honolulu, HI; Prescott, AZ; Atlanta, GA; Minneapolis, MN; and Richmond, VA)
- Two VA TeleICU centers in Minneapolis, MN and Cincinnati, OH provide additional support to intensive care unit staff in approximately 300 out of about 1,700 VA ICU beds across the nation.
- VA's TeleGenomic Medicine Services, based in Utah, provides genomic medicine and counseling service to more than 80 VA medical centers.
- VA's National TeleMental Health Center, based in Connecticut, provides national clinical experts in affective, psychotic, anxiety, and substance use disorders, as well as neurology treatment and has provided services to more than 5,600 Veterans in the last seven years.

VA Telehealth Outcomes

Improved patient outcomes resulting in reduced use of inpatient care in FY17

- Veterans enrolled in Home Telehealth for non-institutional care needs and chronic care management had a 57 percent decrease in VA bed days of care, and a 31 percent decrease in VA hospital admissions.
- Mental Health services provided to Veterans via Clinical Video Telehealth (TeleMental Health) reduced Acute Psychiatric VA bed days of care by 34 percent, and VA hospital admissions by 31 percent.

High Veteran satisfaction scores in FY17:

- 92 percent for Clinical Video Telehealth
- 88 percent for Home Telehealth
- 93 percent for Store and Forward Telehealth