



Photo: Tommy Leonardi



VA research on

HEALTH CARE DELIVERY

VA has a nationwide cadre of health services researchers who examine health care itself. They look at everything from the computer technology used in health care to small talk between doctors and patients during office visits.

ABOUT HEALTH CARE DELIVERY

- Health services researchers play a vital role in shaping the delivery of health care by studying access, cost, and quality. They seek to improve health care by coming up with ways to assess and improve how the system functions.
- Research on health care delivery examines new models of providing care to patients. This includes studying ways to share information with patients and health care providers, the interactions between patients and clinicians, and the economics of health care.
- Many VA researchers work with health care informatics, finding ways to use technology to benefit both science and communications, including looking at how the Internet can be used for patient communication and telehealth.
- Health services researchers also look at new ways to accomplish research itself, including reducing the time it takes to conduct research projects and have the results adopted into everyday care.

VA RESEARCH ON HEALTH CARE DELIVERY: OVERVIEW

- VA's [Health Services Research and Development](#) (HSR&D) works to identify and evaluate innovative strategies that

lead to accessible, high quality, cost-effective care for Veterans and the nation. This work includes special centers and programs to promote innovative and collaborative research.

- VA investigators are involved in a number of initiatives focused on improving access to care for Veterans, as well as improving the quality of the care Veterans receive. These initiatives include implementing programs outside of hospitals and clinics, getting Veterans and providers involved in improving access to care, and identifying the best strategies for effective treatments.
- VA's [National Center for Patient Safety](#) works to reduce and prevent inadvertent harm to Veterans as a result of their care. This center develops and provides practical tools to improve patient safety in areas such as teamwork and simulated training, safe patient handling and movement, and patient fall prevention and management.
- Patient Aligned Care Teams have transformed how primary care is delivered in VA. These integrated teams aim to deliver care that is patient-driven, team-based, comprehensive, and coordinated. Researchers have looked at how this transformation has been implemented in VA, and how PACTs have influenced Veterans' health.

• VA researchers have led the way in exploring how care can be enhanced by the use of telephone, Internet, videoconferencing, email, and text messaging.

• VA is quickening the pace at which research is conducted and the results translated into everyday care. One new approach is point-of-care research, in which patients take part in studies as part of their usual care routine, without the need for special study visits.

• VA invests significant resources in supporting health care informatics and "big data" research. Among other goals, VA researchers hope to use population informatics to improve the diagnosis and care of cancer through automated surveillance and enhanced data access for clinical providers.

SELECTED MILESTONES AND MAJOR EVENTS

- 1960** – Opened VA's first [HSR&D](#) center in Fort Howard, Md.
- 1999** – Established the [VA National Center for Patient Safety](#) in Ann Arbor, Mich.
- 2008** – Created [VINCI](#), a high-performance computing environment offering researchers access to comprehensive VHA data

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2013 – Funded first Collaborative Research to Enhance and Advance Transformation and Excellence ([CREATE](#)) to encourage collaboration among researchers to improve Veterans' health care

2015 – [Published](#), in the Federal Register, a plan to improve access to articles and data prepared by VA researchers while protecting Veterans' data and privacy

RECENT STUDIES: SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS

- **Contamination of the skin and clothing of health care personnel** occurs frequently during removal of contaminated gloves or gowns, according to researchers at the Cleveland VA Medical Center. This contamination can lead to infection risk, and educational interventions are needed for the safety of both patients and health care workers, say the researchers. ([JAMA Internal Medicine](#), December 2015)
- **Telemedicine-based diabetes management improved outcomes** for Veterans with persistently poor diabetes control. A study of 50 Veterans with diabetes, conducted by Durham VA Medical Center and Duke University researchers, found that telemedicine led

to better diabetes management than clinic-based care only. ([Telemedicine Journal and e-Health](#), April 5, 2015)

- **Veterans who used both the VA health care system and a Medicare Advantage plan** had neither better nor worse health outcomes than Veterans who used only VA care, found researchers from several VA medical centers and their colleagues. Many Veterans use non-VA health to supplement their VA care, a practice that this study suggests does not result in fragmented care with poorer outcomes. ([Health Services Research](#), December 2015)

- **VA has developed the “No Preventable Harms” campaign** to reduce occurrences of preventable safety problems such as infections, medication-related errors, and blood clots. An initiative by experts within a seven-hospital Midwestern VA network led to a significant reduction in catheter-associated urinary tract infections in non-intensive care units. Regional collaborations such as this could be a valuable strategy to address important patient safety problems, say the researchers. ([American Journal of Infection Control](#), March 1, 2015)

- **Mobile phones and the Internet could help address the health care needs of homeless Veterans**, according to researchers with the VA Center for Healthcare Organization and Implementation Research in Bedford, Mass. The researchers found that a large percentage of homeless Veterans surveyed had mobile phones and access to the Internet, and nearly all were interested in receiving mobile reminders and outreach about their health care. ([Telemedicine Journal and e-Health](#), Sep. 3, 2014)

- **Diagnostic errors affect at least 1 in 20 U.S. adults**, found researchers with the Houston VA Center for Innovations in Quality, Effectiveness and Safety. The researchers say that this evidence should encourage policymakers, health care organizations, and researchers to make efforts to measure and reduce diagnostic errors. ([BMJ Quality and Safety](#), April 17, 2014)

For more information on VA studies on health care delivery and other key topics relating to Veterans' health, please visit www.research.va.gov/topics

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