

**Student Training Outline –Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC)
Year 4 Health Care Management Clerkship (OCOM 895)
Appendix I - Academic Year 2007/2008**

I. Purpose

The primary intent of the VAMC experience is for students to achieve a better understanding of the nationwide health system for veterans that is run and financed by the federal government. Students are to focus on: 1) how the VA's extensive electronic medical records (EMR) system known as the Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA) improves patient safety and lowers cost; 2) the role of VAMC physicians in improving the quality of care by practicing evidence-based medicine (EBM) and using telemedicine; and 3) use of the Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS) by health care providers to record every office visit, prescription, lab test, x-ray, and medical procedure as well as review and update a patient's EMR and place orders from any of the VA's over 1,000 health care facilities.

II. Suggested Learning Issues (to be supplemented by VA representative)

1. How veterans initially access the VA system for their health care needs.
2. Advantages of computerized records relative to documentation, accurate data access and sharing, cost efficiency, error reduction, preventive measure prompts, automatic displays of latest studies/best practices for patient's condition, and patient satisfaction.
3. Evidenced-based treatment and use of technology to promote a culture of quality and improve patient care.

During the VAMC experience, the VA representative is asked to:

1. Discuss how the VA's integrated, organized, national health-care system overhauled in the mid-1990s works for the patient and health care provider.
2. Orient the students to the national electronic networks of VistA and CPRS that has been up and running in all of the VA facilities since 2000.
3. Cover VA's investment in preventive and primary care to lower long-term costs.
4. Review the process that the VA uses to implement system-wide changes.
5. Identify accountability and quality measurements the VA uses for benchmarking.

III. Possible Questions for Students to Ask/Initiate during this Experience

- A. What is the annual federal budget allocation for free and/or low-cost care for eligible veterans and their beneficiaries?
- B. What does the VA spend on average per patient vs. the national average?
- C. As the largest health-care network in the U.S., how many patients are served by the VA?
- D. How does EMR increase patient safety and cost savings? Telemedicine?
- E. How do EMR and Telemedicine improve communication and promote continuity of care?
- F. Is the VA permitted to negotiate prices with drug companies and other suppliers?