



**Student Training Outline –Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center/Clinic
Year 4 Health Care Management Clerkship (OCOM 895)
Appendix I - Academic Year 2008/2009**

I. Purpose

The primary intent of the VA Medical Center 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)

- A. How veterans initially access the VA system for their health care needs.
- B. 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.
- C. Evidenced-based treatment and use of technology to promote a culture of quality and improve patient care.
- D. ***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?