Optimizing Virtual Health in the Military Health System

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Chair, Health Care Delivery Subcommittee
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Overview

- Membership
- Review Tasking
- Summary of Subcommittee Activities to Date
- Areas of Interest
- Way Ahead
On May 2, 2022, the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs directed the Defense Health Board (“the Board”) to **review the current state of virtual health from a strategic and tactical perspective and provide recommendations on optimizing virtual health decision making and implementation.**
Background

• Virtual Health (VH) in the MHS has moved from collaboration among Component programs to a single programmatic approach.

• The targeted use of Virtual Health (VH) capabilities expanded during the COVID-19 pandemic.

• Research suggests VH enhances MHS medical force optimization, particularly with respect to patient access and satisfaction.

• The MHS strategic plans should guide future investment and implementation of VH throughout the system.
Objectives and Scope

• Review current state of VH from a strategic and tactical perspective.

• Provide recommendations for optimizing VH decision making and implementation.
Summary of Activities to Date

• March 30, 2022 briefing to DHB on the background of VH in the MHS by Lt Col Nathan Reynolds
  • VH only when clinically feasible, will not replace face-to-face healthcare
  • DHA has identified four factors that can inform VH decision making going forward:
    1. Operational need
    2. Support of high-volume, high-risk, or high-cost care to maximize cost reduction
    3. Reduction in private sector cost
    4. Reduction in unnecessary health care utilization
  • Three main capabilities:
    1. Patient-to-provider
    2. Provider-to-provider
    3. Complex, real-time monitoring
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| Issues with health care access and equity | • Rural and Geographically isolated areas – technology deserts and limited access to providers  
• Some populations may have limited technological knowledge  
• Some populations may not have technological tools or limited to mobile |
| Diverse Population                | • Beneficiaries – wide range of age and demographics  
• Variety of health care needs                                                                                                                   |
| Primary care, behavioral health, specialty care | • Primary care, dermatology, and mental health more accessible as VH than some specialty care  
• VH can provide initial visits, follow up appointments, and other visits based on type of specialty care  
• Dearth of providers in some specialties, e.g., mental health                                                                                   |
| Value-based care                  | • Focus on quality of care and how VH can improve patient outcomes  
• Decrease fragmentation by changing workflow                                                                                                |
### Areas of Interest (2 of 2)

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| Virtual Health technological advances  | • What new VH technologies are available  
• How might these be used in the MHS  
• What does the VH technology future look like—VR, AI, etc. |
| Implementation in large systems        | • Look to large health care organizations for best practices to implement VH  
• Analyze lessons learned by the large health care organizations                           |
| Strategic planning                     | • Utilize knowledge gained from the large health care organizations who have successfully implement system with VH  
• Determine how best to implement changes and innovations for VH in the MHS  
• Create workflows and metrics to determine effectiveness of VH in the MHS  
• Consider sustainability to ensure long-term VH use |
Way Ahead

• Health Care Delivery Subcommittee Kick-Off Meeting: June 29, 2022
• Regularly scheduled Subcommittee meetings with briefings and report development discussion
• Anticipated briefings to Subcommittee on:
  • Benefits and risks associated with VH for the diverse population of the MHS (direct care and purchased care)
  • Trends in decision making regarding VH implementation for large health care systems
  • Technology advances and overcoming challenges implementing VH
  • Future trends in VH – how to predict and how they may meet the needs of the MHS across the board
  • Strategies moving forward to optimize VH in the MHS