Welcome to the eighth edition of the Department of Defense (DoD)/Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Interagency Program Office's (IPO) quarterly bulletin, The IPO Bridge! Inside this issue, you will read about IPO’s recent accomplishments, key engagements, and future priorities to advance interoperability capabilities and information exchange, as well as address the technological challenges of tomorrow. Thank you for your continued dedication as we progress into the next fiscal year. We look forward to continuing our collaborations, expanding our network of health IT partners, and achieving our goal of enhancing health data interoperability for the DoD and VA’s electronic health record (EHR) modernization efforts. We’d also like to recognize Mr. John Short for his efforts as Acting Deputy Director of the IPO. We wish him the best in his future endeavors. If you have feedback or questions, please contact dha.ncr.peo-ipo.mbx.ipo@mail.mil.

Lauren C. Thompson, Ph.D.
Director, DoD/VA IPO

Helga E. Rippen, MD, Ph.D., MPH, FACPM
Deputy Director, DoD/VA IPO

DoD/VA EHR & Related Projects

The IPO continues to serve as a central resource for modernization activities between the DoD and VA. At the end of 2017, the Joint Executive Committee (JEC), comprised of senior leadership from both the DoD and VA, tasked the IPO to create and maintain a Joint DoD/VA Timeline for EHR and related modernization projects by the Departments. The Joint Timeline highlights key interoperability milestones such as, cross department dependencies and critical paths, crucial to the deployment of EHR systems to DoD and VA facilities. The IPO manages this schedule in order to oversee and monitor progress and enhance communication and coordination between Departments as they continue to modernize their respective EHRs, ultimately ensuring a patient-centric healthcare experience, seamless care transitions, and overall improved healthcare delivery. Mr. Charles “Jay” McCloud, Jr., the Director of the IPO’s Joint Modernization & Interoperability Hub, a Division created to facilitate continued dialogue between the Departments, stated “...this integrated master schedule ensures essential operations and plans are properly managed and executed for seamless EHR solution(s) to greatly enhance interoperability for the benefit of service members, veterans, and their families.”

MHS GENESIS Updates

Program Executive Office, Defense Healthcare Management Systems continues its efforts to transform the delivery of healthcare and advance data sharing through a modernized electronic health record for service members, veterans, and their families. Its Program Management Office, the DoD’s Healthcare Management System Modernization (DHMSM), in collaboration with its industry partner, the Leidos Partnership for Defense Health (LPDH), engaged representatives from Initial Operational Capability (IOC) sites and functional, technical, and test communities to complete the MHS GENESIS baseline software configuration based on lessons learned from IOC sites, prior to fielding throughout the Military Health System (MHS). These representatives traveled to the Pacific Northwest to collaborate with the IOC sites in order to optimize the current solution, focusing on training, adoption of workflows, and change management activities. PEO DHMS continues its goal to identify a repeatable deployment strategy for implementation across the enterprise. These efforts will ensure MHS GENESIS integrates inpatient and outpatient solutions that connect medical and dental information across the continuum of care. During a U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee testimony, Ms. Stacy A. Cummings noted, “...MHS GENESIS isn’t just a technology. It’s a transformation of culture and process that is powered by strong leadership from inside the MHS.”

Welcome to the IPO, Dr. Rippen!

In January, the IPO welcomed its new Deputy Director, Dr. Helga E. Rippen. Alongside Dr. Thompson, Dr. Rippen leads the DoD and VA’s efforts to implement national health data standards for interoperability and guides the IPO as the single point of accountability for identifying, monitoring, and approving clinical and technical data standards and profiles. Dr. Rippen brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise in health data interoperability to the IPO through previous service as the President/Chief Executive Officer of Health Sciences of South Carolina, the first statewide health data and research collaborative in the United States. In addition, she led the development of an EHR implementation roadmap as Chief Health Information Officer at Hospital Corporation of America. Welcome, Dr. Rippen!

IPO Empowers Global Health Data Interoperability with HL7

This year, the IPO submitted the Departments’ harmonized ballots to Health Level Seven® International (HL7), for its January ballot cycle, continuing our influence on the use and implementation of standards at a federal level. In addition, the IPO attended HL7’s January Working Group Meeting, a forum that identifies standards which empower global health data interoperability through the exchange, integration, sharing, and retrieval of electronic health information. The meeting offered educational sessions on HL7 topics such as Fast Health Interoperability Resources® (FHIR) and the Clinical Document Architecture® (CDA), Meaningful Use, EHRs, and vocabulary terminologies. As a benefactor member of HL7, the IPO communicates the Departments’ priorities and continues our influence on future health IT standards.
Health IT Day

In January, Dr. Thompson served as moderator of a panel discussion during the Bethesda, Maryland-based chapter of the Armed Forces Communications & Electronic Association’s Annual Health IT Day. The event brought together industry and government professionals to discuss healthcare initiatives in civilian and military health communities. CAPT James Ellzy, Deputy Program Executive Officer, PEO DHMS, Monika Farah-Stapleton, Chief Engineer, DHMSM® Program Management Office, and leaders from Defense Health Agency, joined Dr. Thompson during her panel, sharing updates and progress on the Departments’ EHR modernization activities. Dr. Thompson closed the session by highlighting the IPO’s recent efforts and accomplishments to improve information sharing across the Departments and the nation. Click here to learn more.

IPO’s Joint Interoperability Strategic Plan

This year, the IPO released the Joint Interoperability Plan (JISP), reviewing interoperability and health data sharing strategies, objectives, and the Departments’ five- and 10-year roadmaps. The plan, developed in collaboration with the DoD and VA, identifies gaps and challenges based on published budgets and recommendations from the VA and DoD to synchronize and align interoperability and health data sharing activities. Furthermore, the JISP illustrates the Departments’ commitment to building a fully interoperable infrastructure where care and communication are coordinated among healthcare providers, patients, and public health entities.

IPO Participates at HIMSS18 Conference & Exhibition

In early March, Dr. Thompson and Dr. Rippen attended the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society’s 2018 Conference and Exhibition. This year’s theme, “Where IT Connects for Health,” brought together health IT professionals, clinicians, executives, and vendors from around the world, allowing participants to experience educational opportunities, hear from world-class speakers, and view cutting-edge health IT products. During the event, Dr. Thompson participated in several events including, a Federal Health Community Luncheon titled, “MHS GENESIS: EHR Modernization for Business Transformation” with CAPT Elzy and Mr. R. Clark Campbell, Office of Health Informatics, Veterans Health Administration, as well as a panel discussion titled “Standards and Interoperability for DoD/VA Health Information Exchange,” discussing the importance of interoperability alongside Dr. Paul Cordts, Director, J-5, Strategy, Planning, and Functional Integration of DHA, Dr. Ashwini Zenooz, Chief Medical Officer, VHA, and Dr. Andrew Gettinger, M.D., Chief Medical Information Officer, Director, Office of Clinical Quality and Safety, Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology. In addition, the IPO joined several authors from the DoD, VA, and DHA, showcasing a poster on the DoD and VA’s progress on the Health Information Exchange (HIE) On-boarding Process from 2012 to 2017. The poster highlighted the more than $25 billion in healthcare purchased by the Departments from civilian physicians and institutions and the exchange of more than 600,000 health documents with civilian HIEs each month. Click here to learn more.

Meet Our Staff – Mr. John Burke

Mr. John Burke serves as the Co-Lead and Chief Engineer of the IPO’s Standards & Technology Division, coordinating the seamless integration of health data between the DoD, VA, and private healthcare providers through consistent use of clinical terminologies, adherence to technical standards and industry best practices. Additionally, in December 2017, Mr. Burke was recognized for 25 years of service with the VA. Congratulations, Mr. Burke, on this achievement and thank you for your efforts to improve the delivery of healthcare to service members, veterans, and their families.

IPO’s Joint Interoperability Strategic Plan

This year, the IPO will release version four of the Health Data Interoperability Management Plan (HDIMP) to assist the DoD and the VA in achieving their Health Data Interoperability mission. “...our HDIMP summarizes the specific strategy, guidance, roles, responsibilities, activities, and processes of the IPO necessary to improve our overall health data exchange, as well as terminology standardization for the Departments’ EHRs, as well as our public and private partners,” noted Mr. Anthoney Gilyard, Director of the IPO’s Interagency Coordination Division. “...the most recent version of the document ensures the synchronization with stakeholder objectives, new policies, technical developments, national standards, and other external changes,” he continued.

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