

Military history needs to be part of National Electronic Health Records

“Vietnam Veterans of America applauds the current efforts of those in the healthcare industry to use advances in information technology to create, as President Obama has called for, a national system of electronic health records (EHRs) similar to that used by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA),” said John Rowan, VVA National President.

“As we mark Health IT Week, we urge that any such system include significant questions that develop a veteran’s history of military service.

“More than 75 percent of America’s veterans are treated by clinicians in the private sector,” Rowan noted. “However, most private-sector providers do not identify these veterans. The reality is that military service can pose potential risks to the health of those who serve. For the most part, immediate health issues—bullet or shrapnel wounds, traumatic amputations, obvious injuries to the brain—are treated properly, initially by military medical

personnel, then by clinicians at VA healthcare facilities. However, some health conditions – Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), various cancers, and other illnesses that may not be discernible or may not develop until years later – are all too often not connected by veterans to their time in service. And many of these conditions are presumed by the VA to have derived from one’s military service. Information regarding these health conditions can be found on

www.veteranshealth.org.”

“To ensure that these service-related health issues are tracked,” Rowan said, “VVA strongly supports the interoperable exchange of healthcare information. The quality and cost-effectiveness of care delivery will be greatly enhanced by the timely, accurate, and secure exchange of healthcare data between providers. And for this to come to pass, a complete military medical/health history needs to be taken for all veterans by their clinicians.”

“VVA looks forward to working closely with the Obama Administration, Congress, and the healthcare community to ensure that this happens as quickly as possible.”

Obama tries to ease concerns

President Obama attempted to alleviate veterans concerns in his address to Congress on Sept 9. “One thing that reform won’t change is veterans’ health care,” he said. “No one is going to take away your benefits.” But one lawmaker is not quite so sure. In a written statement issued Sept. 10, Ranking Member of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, Rep. Steve Buyer (R-IN), expressed concern that “in its current form, H.R. 3200 could result in bureaucratic determinations that veterans enrolled in VA health care do not meet acceptable coverage standards, exposing them to a new 2.5% punitive individual income tax. This is just one of several provisions in the bill that could harm veterans.” Prior to the summer recess, the House Energy and Commerce Committee approved two of six changes to H.R. 3200 that Rep. Buyer and other House lawmakers feel are necessary to ensure veterans are not adversely affected by the ongoing reform effort. The remaining four items have yet to be addressed, including the provision exempting veterans from the new healthcare tax.



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