

ORAL STATEMENT  
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HVAC Full Committee Hearing on EHRM  
September 14, 2023

Good morning, Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano and distinguished Members of the Committee. I very much appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of VA's journey to modernize its electronic health record (EHR). During the past 5 years, I have been involved in the EHR modernization from many vantage points – as former Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Clinical Operations (ADUSH/CO), and since Fall of 2020, as the Network Director for VISN 20 – a Network that encompasses most notably four (4) of the facilities that are now live with the new EHR system. Dr. Evans has introduced the three leaders that were able to travel to be here today. These leaders – Mr. Kelter, Ms. Nelson-Brooks, and Dr. Fischer – led their respective staff through the early days of training, excitement, and uncertainty as a new electronic health record was deployed at their sites – one that was new to VA. Dr. Cellura, Medical Center Director, and former Chief of Staff at Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center and Clinics was unable to join today, but my comments incorporate her input. It is not lost on anyone that healthcare delivery is complex, and the transition to any new system or tool or process brings with it, challenges. Over 4500 VISN 20 staff use the new EHR each day – whether at the local facility, the clinical resource hub, or the clinical contact center (call center). The facility leaders, including their respective leadership teams, continue to champion quality and timely healthcare delivery as they support their frontline staff through the sometimes frustrating, and seemingly never-ending, growing pains of the new EHR. The staff at the collective five (5) live sites are to be commended for not only their resiliency and perseverance but for their unmatched contribution to the important work of “getting it right” with regards to the new electronic health record.

VISN 20 EHRM Deployment Team has been an integral part of our day-to-day operations with regards to the activities involved with pre-deployment and now through sustainment and

improvements. In addition to daily touchpoints with facilities, the team rapidly socializes any new or urgent issues so that all live sites are aware – including our VISN 10 counterparts – a model for a learning organization in action. This deployment team reinforces clear and transparent communication among all live sites as well as the conduit to national councils, program offices, VHA EHR leadership and EHRM IO.

I look forward to being a part of change that VISN 20 is leading. If the 4500 plus VISN 20 users were to speak, they would ask for improved education on proper workflows that would inspire confidence and no doubt increase positivity among the staff; increased bi-directional transparent communication regarding issues at hand (tickets); and streamlining of workflows to decrease the number of clicks. No doubt the dedicated staff from the field and VACO will formulate a successful way forward as we keep lessons learned front and center as we focus on our humble missions.

Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano and Member of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity and for your unwavering support of our nation's Veterans and those who have dedicated their life work to delivering on our promises.