



HEALTH AFFAIRS

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301-1200

RECEIVED

09 FEB 26 PM 5:15

SPEAKER'S ROOMS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPS.

AS
VA Affs

FT

107668

FEB 25 2004

JAN 21 2004

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker of the House of Representatives
U.S House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Section 8147 of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2002 has directed the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to conduct a joint comprehensive assessment of a number of options. The options include: co-locating or sharing facilities and care providers in areas where duplication and excess capacity may exist; optimizing economies of scale through joint procurement of supplies and services; instituting cooperative service agreements, and partially or fully integrating Department of Defense (DoD) and VA systems providing telehealth services, computerized patient records, provider credentialing, surgical quality assessment, rehabilitation services, administrative services, and centers of excellence for specialized health care services. The Act specifically directed that the assessment would be the result of a detailed independent review. A joint report to Congress of that review is required no later than March 1, 2002.

The DoD has sought to fully comply with the requirements of the Act and has collaborated closely with the Department of Veterans Affairs in the design and management of this large effort. The study, called the VA/DoD Joint Assessment Study, is being conducted under the DoD/VA Health Executive Council. While it was originally estimated that the study would begin in July 2002, the study contract was awarded to Mitretek, Inc. in September 2002. The scheduled delivery date for the final report was September 30, 2003.

The contractor requested, and was granted, a delay to December 30, 2003. The delay was attributable to the enormous complexity of the study and unexpected administrative and technical difficulties associated with obtaining patient-level data from both Departments. Addressing these requirements required additional steps in the process of extracting and transmittal of patient data from over 56 million patient encounter records from over 20 data sets.

Three DoD/VA market areas, Puget Sound, Hawaii, and Gulf Coast (Biloxi), are the focus of the study. It has been designed to leverage information about existing integration efforts in the development of a data repository and a standard methodology supporting the objectives of section 8147. The methodology is being applied to each of the market areas with the goal of identifying specific opportunities for these markets. Additionally, these markets will provide an opportunity to refine the methodology for potential follow on applications at the national level.

The contractor has developed market data profiles, which include the creation of integrated definitions of location and facility information, personnel and demographic information, event and work unit data (product/clinical service line mapping). The contractor has also developed a Common Database Data Dictionary and data analysis shells.

We anticipate that the final report will be made available to Congress in March 2004.

Thank you for your continued support of the Military Health System.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William Winckenwerder, Jr." followed by a period.

William Winckenwerder, Jr., MD