

Biomedical and Health Informatics Lecture Series

Thursday, May 19, 2011

1:30 - 2:20 p.m., Room E-216

W. Paul Nichol, MD

Director, Medical Informatics, Office of Informatics and Analytics
Department of Veterans Affairs

Clinical Professor, Department of Medicine and Health Services
University of Washington, Seattle

“Creating the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record: VA Experience with the Nationwide Health Information Network”

Despite an increase in adoption of electronic medical records, most health systems do not regularly exchange patient information in an interoperable electronic format. Patients still often resort to carrying paper records or CD's to provide continuity of information when being seen by a new care provider or entering a new system. Challenges in accessing these records, patient safety concerns, lack of data availability for analytic and decision support systems, and duplication of testing are among the many challenges created by current record exchange processes. The goal of Nationwide Health Information Network (NwHIN) is to provide a means by which health and healthcare entities are able to securely exchange interoperable health information. In 2009 President Obama directed the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to create the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Medical Record (VLER) which “... will ultimately contain administrative and medical information from the day an individual enters military service throughout their military career and after they leave the military.”

Since January of 2010, the VA and DoD have been partnering with community health systems to use the NwHIN framework to begin implementation of the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record. Dr. Nichol will discuss this on-going project describing the current strategy and approach, roles of NwHIN Exchange and Direct, issues identified, and future directions. Washington State will play a key role with a pilot initiated in the Spokane area in March and a second pilot in south Puget Sound planned for September of this year. The Puget Sound pilot will include the most comprehensive data set to date and involves working with a vendor whose EMR is used by many health systems in the state.

Dr. Nichol is a Clinical Professor in the Schools of Medicine and Public Health at the University of Washington (UW). He is a graduate of Dartmouth College and the Duke School of Medicine. He completed his internal medicine training at the Oregon Health Sciences University where he also spent a sabbatical year in the Department of Medical Informatics and Clinical Epidemiology. In his current VA role he is involved at the national level in health information exchange, clinical information system development and deployment, and consumer health informatics.