

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Service (P&LMS)**

**Report to the
Intersociety Pathology Council (IPC)
Sunday, March 22, 2015**

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The VA Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Service continues to provide high quality services to support patient care in the nations largest integrated healthcare system. All of the laboratories in the VA continue to be fully accredited by external inspection agencies. VA laboratories continue to provide valuable training experiences for both resident physicians and non-physician laboratorians through affiliation agreements. VA pathologists continue to provide high quality diagnostic, educational, and research services. Highlighted below are but a few of the issues initiatives, and projects in which VA P&LMS was involved.

- 1.) The Vista Blood Establishment Computer Software (VBECS) has received continuing updates. Positive patient identification has been added for transfusions via the VA Barcode Extension project. VA has completed installation at four sites and is now in the process of national deployment. An adaptation of the software for use in tracking human tissues is in the planning stages.
- 2.) The VA in support of it growing telemedicine service is developing a tele-pathology module to be deployed as part of its VISTA software system. This new system builds on our existing tele-radiology functionality and will allow for tele-consultations between the VA hospitals using static, video, and whole slide imaging.
- 3.) VA tele-medicine is developing mobile applications for creating laboratory orders and viewing results. This application will integrate with the electronic health record, laboratory, and pharmacy systems.
- 4.) The VA has successfully implemented both MRSA and *C. difficile* tracking and screening programs. With the emergence of carbapenem resistant enterococci (CRE) a multi-drug resistant organism tracking system is being developed for deployment by 2017 to allow tracking of CRE as well as emergent organisms. This system will tie into the VA's existing HAIIS system providing automated collection for the public health systems.
- 5.) VA P&LMS has developed staffing model for its facilities to use in determining the number of pathologists needed for a facility based on clinical work load. This system uses the VA's internal work relative value unit rather than the medicare/medicaid RVU and includes consideration of the clinical non-RVU

generating activities in the final calculation. The goal is to provide facility management with a better understanding of their staffing needs and provide for representation of the large amount of non-RVU generating clinical activity performed by pathologists. VA is beginning the process of generating a staffing model for technical supervisory and bench level staff and is actively updating qualification standards for laboratory scientists, histotechnologists and laboratory technicians to reflect modern laboratory management and business practices as well as the changing nature of the services performed in laboratories.

- 6.) VA PLMS has created workgroups for the evaluation of molecular and genetic testing for veterans. Workgroups have been formed for the major testing modalities including representation of the VA genetic medicine service and are creating national guidelines for laboratory test selection in support laboratory and clinical services.