Naval Hospital Bremerton Process Improvement Program a Record Innovation

By MC2 Jonathan Jiang, Naval Hospital Bremerton

BREMERTON, Wash. (NNS) -- Naval Hospital Bremerton (NHB) Sailors were recognized by the Secretary of the Navy for their vital role in a process improvement program.

Their collective efforts conserved over 7,300 man-hours a year, reduced the Patient Administration Medical Records Division workload by nearly 40 percent, and saved approximately $156,400 a year.

Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Kyle Church, Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class James Cooper and Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Seth Edwards worked together to create the Medical Records Data Automation Program (MRDAP), which automates and streamlines the day-to-day operations of the Medical Records Department.

NHB maintains approximately 55,000 medical records of patients who receive treatment and ensures that all the records are up to date and contain the correct official documentation of the medical history of patients.

"You're doing the same thing for 1,000 plus records," said Church, from Levan, Utah. "We got sick of that and so we were like, 'How are going to improve this?'"
Edwards, Church and Cooper realized that many of the time-consuming tasks could be automated and set out to create a computer program to benefit not only NHB but also the patients.

"We wanted to simplify processes and steps needed to efficiently complete tasks that would take twice as long for a human to complete," said Cooper, a native of Atlanta, Ga.

The three Sailors began working on their project when they were still third class petty officers. Initially Edwards was the only one of the group who had prior knowledge of software coding but the three of them learned on their own using online tutorials and working from home while off duty on their personal computers.

"Our chain of command was supportive in us creating and implementing MRDAP, but a lot of the leg work was driven by our team and staff input," said Cooper.

Their initial goal was to create a program to track the current inventory of records. Now, over two years later, they are on their 415th iteration with a list of features that has grown to include daily Defense Eligibility and Enrollment Reporting System (DEERS) eligibility checks, cross-checking of records with Composite Health Care System (CHCS), automated correspondence and mailing tracking, and integrated CD encryption and burning.

The MRDAP system centralizes all the necessary STR information to research, track, and report the status of all retired records.

The system accounts for the record location, displays all activity related to the records, automatically completes required forms, and directly connects to the FedEx tracking system to show records of when it was received and who signed for it.

Compiling this important information ensures that any weekly requests for information are responded to within minutes, not days.

Overall, MRDAP reduces workload of tracking, calling, and completing reports and enables the hospital to exceed the requirement to submit STRs within five days of a member’s separation.
With MRDAP, the changes to the medical records department's workload were dramatic and swift.

"Take a DEERS eligibility check, which is required on a quarterly basis, for example. We would manually pull each record and check the profile in CHCS. The entire process would take hours," said Church. "MRDAP can complete the entire check in ten minutes."

The benefits did not go unnoticed. The program was recently recognized by the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) during the hospital's 2016 Joint Commission inspection. Church, Cooper and Edwards also received an honorable mention for the 2016 Secretary of the Navy Annual Innovation Award in the category of automated process development.

"For someone to recognize that, it's a really big thing," said Church.

Cooper added, "We created the database to make our lives and our patient's lives easier. I think it was recognized because of our ability to fix a process that was broken. We have been able to get results from processes that would usually take hours, days, weeks and months to complete and have shortened the timeframe to, in most cases, minutes. One example is that a release of information request used to take about 30 to 45 days to receive upon checking into the front counter, but now we are able to get most of those requests filled within a few minutes or an hour at most."

MRDAP is now being utilized at all of NHB's branch health clinics. Overall, MRDAP saved the command several work hours per year, which can be equated to a major workload reduction for each Medical Records Technician and a significant cost savings for just one Medical Treatment Facility, of which there are over 300 in the MHS.

"What is most impressive is these young sailors had no fear of failure and despite no personal or monetary gain they continued to capture the ideas of their coworkers to improve workflows in their department that benefited everyone. Promoting innovation is like growing grass. Sometimes you already have the soil, water and sun. All that is needed is a safe and supportive environment to grow. That is what you will find at Naval Hospital Bremerton," stated Cmdr. Robert McMahon, Director for Administration.
The program also has another role to play on the horizon as by the end of 2017. The Navy, as well as other services, will implement the new electronic health record (EHR) MHS GENESIS, phasing out various electronic medical records programs currently in use, such as CHCS. MRDAP will be able to track and look back at the data during the transition period, serving as a bridge between the old and new systems.


For more news from Naval Hospital Bremerton, visit www.navy.mil/local/nhb/.

Naval Hospital Bremerton (NHB) Sailors were recognized with honorable mention for the 2016 Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Innovation Award in the Automated Process Development.

The SECNAV Innovation Awards recognize the top innovators within the Department of the Navy (DON). Their accomplishments are remarkable and serve as inspiration for the Navy and Marine Corps to think boldly and solve the fleet and force’s most challenging problems.