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Less paper with better care

Tripler phasing in new military computer-based medical record system

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Honolulu--A revolution in U.S. military medicine is coming to Tripler Army Medical Center in May. Tripler's staff is now installing and being trained to use a new, computerized system called the Composite Health Care System II (CHCS II). CHCS II will eventually replace service members' and their family members' paper medical files at Tripler, as well as at all military medical facilities around the world.

Today, most information about patients are recorded and stored on paper, requiring hundreds of feet of shelf space at clinics and hospitals for patient medical records. CHCS II will eventually be used to record and store all military patients' medical information in one large, computerized database on the mainland. The days of large paper medical records and stacks of handwritten documents will slowly come to an end.

Initially, medical records will continue in paper form at facilities caring for patients. However, all new records will also be entered into the CHCS II database. This will allow authorized medical providers in military hospitals worldwide to view online a single, up-to-date record for each patient.

This system will eventually eliminate duplicate files, which always have the risk of not including the latest information about a patient. Through CHCS II, a healthcare provider can easily check to ensure a patient's prescriptions aren't in conflict. Another advantage of CHCS II is that patients won't have to repeat lab work and x-rays, simply because their paper records are not readily available.

In preparing for CHCS II, medical histories from August 2003 of all patients are being entered into the centralized database. Patients with medical histories earlier than that date, however, will continue to have their paper records on file, to supplement their electronic medical records. However, as new visits are completed, the new entries in the electronic health record will eventually cover all the information in the paper record.

CHCS II is a Department of Defense-wide medical initiative that started in January 2004 at seven U.S. military hospitals. It was introduced to medical facilities in Europe in January 2005. The Pacific region is the last major geographic area to be phased in. By the end of 2006, the system will include all Department of Defense medical facilities, including dental facilities.

As part of the transition, healthcare providers, their support staff and other facility personnel are now being trained to use the new CHCS II software program. To allow doctors and other healthcare providers' time to learn how to enter and obtain information about their patients into CHCS II, longer and fewer appointments per day will be scheduled for patients. However, to reduce the impact on patient care, only a few providers in each clinic will be involved in the training at any particular time.