

Teleretinal Imaging to Screen for Diabetic Retinopathy in the Veterans Health Administration

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Abstract

Diabetes is the leading cause of adult vision loss in the United States and other industrialized countries. While the goal of preserving vision in patients with diabetes appears to be attainable, the process of achieving this goal poses a formidable challenge to health care systems. The large increase in the prevalence of diabetes presents practical and logistical challenges to providing quality care to all patients with diabetes. Given this challenge, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is increasingly using information technology as a means of improving the efficiency of its clinicians. The VHA has taken advantage of a mature computerized patient medical record system by integrating a program of digital retinal imaging with remote image interpretation (teleretinal imaging) to assist in providing eye care to the nearly 20% of VHA patients with diabetes. We describe this clinical pathway for accessing patients with diabetes in ambulatory care settings, evaluating their retinas for level of diabetic retinopathy with a teleretinal imaging system, and prioritizing their access into an eye and health care program in a timely and appropriate manner.

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Abbreviations: (CPRS) computerized patient record system, (DOD) Department of Defense, (DR) diabetic retinopathy, (FY) fiscal year, (HbA1c) hemoglobin A1c, (NM) nonmydriatic image, (VA) Veterans Affairs, (VHA) Veterans Health Administration, (VISN) Veterans Integrated Service Networks, (VistA) Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture

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