

The Road to VA Data: Patience, Persistence & Penalties

Missouri Cancer Registry (MCR)

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Background

- 3 VA facilities in MO with registries.
- All had been reporting to MCR under agreements renewed every 3 years.
- No major problems with data collection until VA directive in 2007.
 - Federal facilities only unaudited hospitals.
- MCR had already received most 2005 cases from one facility & a few cases from a second facility.

Timeline: August 2007

- NPCR states notified by CDC:
 - VHA Directive 2007-023 Release of VA Data to State Central Cancer Registries.
 - Existing data release agreements between CCRs and VA facilities are no longer in effect.
 - New agreement and standing letter of request for data must be implemented by 27 Sept. 07.
- VA Directive:
 - DTA must be completed & signed using the VA's DTA Template.

Timeline: Sept. – Oct. 2007

- MCR staff draft a DTA for 1st MO VA facility.
 - Tried to follow VA DTA template.
 - Realized we couldn't comply.
 - Now what?
- MCR PM learned that the NCR had executed a DTA with their VA facility.

Timeline: Nov. 2007 – Mar. 2008

- MCR focused on NAACCR & NPCR Calls for Data, NPCR application/progress report, new protocol to obtain death records, etc.
- Obtained copy of DTA from NCR.
- Otherwise, little progress toward a DTA for MO facilities.

Timeline: April 2008

- Draft DTA prepared.
 - Web Plus (WP) for submission of VA data to MCR.
 - MCR flag all VA cases, no re-release of PHI.
- APM verified names/titles of VA directors.
- OD sent certified letter & DTA to each VA facility.
 - Requested response within 2 weeks of receipt.

Timeline: May 2008

- Regional VA attorney in St. Louis called OD.
 - Contacted by one MO VA facility.
 - Not been contacted by other two facilities.
 - Requested copy of MO cancer reporting statutes.
 - Main question: Any penalties? **YES!**
- 2nd call from attorney.
 - ISOs question whether submission by WP140-2 compliant.

May 2008 (continued)

- APM checked MU's FTP site.
 - Not FIPS 140-2 compliant.
 - No timeframe for updating to 140-2.
- At MCR's request, WP development team sent WP info to VA attorney who forwarded info to ISOs.
- VA ISOs at 1st facility "not comfortable" & won't agree WP meets FIPS 140-2 standards.

May 2008 (continued)

- 2nd MO VA facility – MCR's DTA does not match VA template.
 - Registrar sends cover letter & DTA to national VA who responds that:
 - Cover letter & DTA text don't match.
 - MCR needs to change cover letter to match DTA. (MCR re-words cover letter).
 - No comment about DTA not matching template.

Timeline: June 2008

- No response from 3rd MO VA facility.
- APM called facility director's office.
 - Claimed certified letter never received.
 - Letter & DTA resent via certified email & fax to director (and clerical support person).

Timeline: July 2008

- VA attorney – ISOs say WP site must have trusted certificate provider (e.g., VeriSign, Verizon, Thawte, etc.)
- MU is its own authority.
 - Considered “untrusted” by VA.
 - VA won’t recognize.
- VA: “If the website can correct the certificate issue, all security issues/concerns will have been addressed.”

July 2008 (continued)

- Hospital IT contacted – FIPS 140-2 program?
 - Told few on campus aware of FIPS standards.
- Contacted Campus IT:
 - Told they have recently purchased new program, MoveIT.
 - MCR staff have discussions with IT.
- Contacted VA attorney.
 - She forwarded info on MoveIT to ISOs.
 - Informed MCR she now has all 3 DTAs to review.

Timeline: August 2008

- APM contacts VA attorney –
 - Says OD is asking what is delaying execution of DTAs.
 - Do we need to address other issues?
 - Do we need to work with facilities individually?
 - VA attorney says she'll handle.

August (continued)

- APM contacts VA attorney again.
 - Status of DTAs?
 - Suggests may be best if we contact each one.
- Confirmation from all 3 VA facilities that MoveIT is okay.
- MCR changes DTAs
 - MoveIT, not WP, for data submission.
 - Minor changes made to cover letter.

Timeline: September 2008

- Revised cover letter/DTAs sent to VA attorney.
 - She'll get signatures & return each to MCR.
- First signed DTA received.
- VA attorney calls:
 - Hold agreements.
 - DTAs are hot topic at national meeting.
 - Confirmation of law enforcement piece needed.

September 2007 (continued)

- VA attorney calls again.
 - Materials & DTAs have been reviewed.
 - MO is okay!
 - Says she thinks many CCRs will have a different result.
- If the CCR cannot qualify as a “law enforcement entity” VA cannot provide data.
 - That MO statutes give possible sanction of fines is what allows VA to provide data to MCR.

Timeline: Oct. – Nov. 2008

- All 3 signed DTAs are in MCR's possession.
- MCR staff continue to work with:
 - MU IT to get MoveIT set up.
 - VA ISOs and registrars to get data files submitted to MCR.
- All MU IT staff sign MCR confidentiality agreements.

Nov. 2008 (continued)

- All 3 signed DTAs are in MCR's possession.
- MCR staff continue to work with:
 - MU IT to get MoveIT set up.
 - VA ISOs and registrars to get data files submitted to MCR.
- All MU IT staff sign MCR confidentiality agreements.
- So, we're ready? Right?

November 2008 (continued)

- Wrong!
- Processing issues:
 - To be continued – Security session on Friday.

Dec. 2008 – Jan. 2009

- By early December 2008, MCR was receiving files.
 - Internal processing issues not resolved.
 - No cases in the NAACCR & NPCR 22-month calls for data.
- By January 2009, MCR was able to resolve some processing issues.
 - Some VA data included in NPCR 12-month call for data.

Summary

- Communication issues:
 - Registrars not in loop on facility side. MCR provided status reports.
 - Copies of the DTA not always provided to HIM director and registrars at a VA facility.
- Keys to success:
 - Patience, perseverance and penalties.
 - Without penalties (even though not enforced), we would not have succeeded.
 - Location at a university facilitated success.