



# TRANSFORMING HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS

*Million Hearts™—Success in Cholesterol Management*

## FAST FACTS

**Location:** Nationwide

**Innovations:** The Veterans Health Administration overhauled its health care system, incorporating electronic health records and placing a priority on primary care.

**Improvement:** The changes dramatically improved the quality of care. The number of patients treated in the system increased, while the number of people admitted to the hospital decreased. Satisfaction with care has been consistently high.

## DEMONSTRATED RESULTS

In less than three years—between 1996 and 1999—the VA health care system completed the largest ever deployment of electronic health records. Priority also was placed on ensuring that a primary care provider was identified for all patients using the system. In fiscal year (FY) 1999, more than 700,000 more patients were treated than in FY 1995 (a 24% increase). Subsequently, national surveys showed that veterans treated at VA medical centers were substantially more likely to receive recommended care services for cardiovascular risk reduction than veterans and insured adults treated at non-VA hospitals and private health care facilities (Ross JS, et al. *Arch Intern Med.* 2008;168:950–58).

In addition, comparisons with patients in private managed care organizations showed that 86% of patients in the VA system had levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol (“bad” cholesterol) under control, compared to only 72% of patients in managed care. VA health care for cardiovascular risk reduction is now considered among the best in the United States, and the VA transformation is viewed as a model for health care reform.

## INNOVATIVE APPROACH

Between 1995 and 1999, the Veterans Health Care System, administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), was reengineered. The re-envisioned system focuses especially on management accountability, care coordination, quality improvement, resource allocation, and information management to drive down costs and improve access to and care for veterans. Numerous systemic changes were implemented, producing dramatically improved quality, service, and operational efficiency.