# Optimizing Virtual Health in the Military Health System

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Chair, Health Care Delivery Subcommittee
June 6, 2022

# Overview

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# Membership

CHAIR
**Brigid McCaw, MD, MPH, MS***

**Greg Ator, MD**

**RADM (Ret.) Wanda Barfield, MD, MPH**
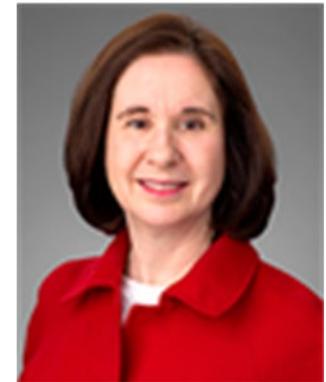
**Rosemary Gibson, MS**

**Reshma Gupta, MD, MS**

**COL Lee Norman, MD, MHS, MBA**

**Col (Ret.) Michael Parkinson, MD, MPH***

**\*Board Member**

# Tasking

On May 2, 2022, the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs directed the Defense Health Board ("the Board") to **review the current state of virtual health from a strategic and tactical perspective and provide recommendations on optimizing virtual health decision making and implementation.**

# Background

- Virtual Health (VH) in the MHS has moved from collaboration among Component programs to a single programmatic approach.

- The targeted use of Virtual Health (VH) capabilities expanded during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Research suggests VH enhances MHS medical force optimization, particularly with respect to patient access and satisfaction.

- The MHS strategic plans should guide future investment and implementation of VH throughout the system.

# Objectives and Scope

- Review current state of VH from a strategic and tactical perspective.

- Provide recommendations for optimizing VH decision making and implementation.

# Summary of Activities to Date

- March 30, 2022 briefing to DHB on the background of VH in the MHS by Lt Col Nathan Reynolds
    - VH only when clinically feasible, will not replace face-to-face healthcare
    - DHA has identified four factors that can inform VH decision making going forward:
        1. Operational need
        2. Support of high-volume, high-risk, or high-cost care to maximize cost reduction
        3. Reduction in private sector cost
        4. Reduction in unnecessary health care utilization
    - Three main capabilities:
        1. Patient-to-provider
        2. Provider-to-provider
        3. Complex, real-time monitoring

# Areas of Interest (1 of 2)

| Topic | Discussion Point |
|---|---|
| Issues with health care access and equity | • Rural and Geographically isolated areas – technology deserts and limited access to providers<br>• Some populations may have limited technological knowledge<br>• Some populations may not have technological tools or limited to mobile |
| Diverse Population | • Beneficiaries – wide range of age and demographics<br>• Variety of health care needs |
| Primary care, behavioral health, specialty care | • Primary care, dermatology, and mental health more accessible as VH than some specialty care<br>• VH can provide initial visits, follow up appointments, and other visits based on type of specialty care<br>• Dearth of providers in some specialties, e.g., mental health |
| Value-based care | • Focus on quality of care and how VH can improve patient outcomes<br>• Decrease fragmentation by changing workflow |

| Topic | Discussion Point |
|---|---|
| Virtual Health technological advances | • What new VH technologies are available<br>• How might these be used in the MHS<br>• What does the VH technology future look like—VR, AI, etc. |
| Implementation in large systems | • Look to large health care organizations for best practices to implement VH<br>• Analyze lessons learned by the large health care organizations |
| Strategic planning | • Utilize knowledge gained from the large health care organizations who have successfully implement system with VH<br>• Determine how best to implement changes and innovations for VH in the MHS<br>• Create workflows and metrics to determine effectiveness of VH in the MHS<br>• Consider sustainability to ensure long-term VH use |

# Way Ahead

- Health Care Delivery Subcommittee Kick-Off Meeting:  June 29, 2022
- Regularly scheduled Subcommittee meetings with briefings and report development discussion
- Anticipated briefings to Subcommittee on:
  - Benefits and risks associated with VH for the diverse population of the MHS (direct care and purchased care)
  - Trends in decision making regarding VH implementation for large health care systems
  - Technology advances and overcoming challenges implementing VH
  - Future trends in VH – how to predict and how they may meet the needs of the MHS across the board
  - Strategies moving forward to optimize VH in the MHS

# Questions