

VA Hospital Visit Review

Last Thursday, I developed a fever, had chills and wasn't feeling well, so I went to the VA Clinic in Green Valley, AZ. I've been using the VA Hospital in Fargo for a couple years and had my Sanford records transferred to the VA. Since the VA is a national organization, I assumed they could access my records, with my approval, of course. I was surprised when the VA Clinic could not access any of my medical records. I asked what I could do, still not feeling well. I was told that my records would have to be transferred from Fargo to Tucson, the nearest hospital VA hospital. I got a phone number and attempted. After three disconnections in twenty minutes, I gave up and drove to the VA Hospital in Tucson, still not feeling well. We went to the office for transferring records. Keri at the center was very helpful and professional and completed the necessary on-line forms to accomplish the record transfer. As I was watching her work on her two computer screens, I was really shocked to see that one of them was in DOS. I know the last version of DOS was in the early 1990s. I was beginning to understand the record access problem. The VA does not appear to have a centralized database and is running applications written twenty years ago. No wonder service is slow. After the transfer was done, we were still not done. I had to have a primary Physician in the Tucson or Green Valley site and only they could access my records. I decided on the Green Valley Clinic, since it is only a mile from our home. Done with that office, I went to the Urgent Care center, since I was still not feeling well. I was not surprised that the center was busy but over the next four hours, I was examined, had blood drawn, consulted about the results was told that I had an infection but nothing to be concerned about and was sent home with instructions to return if I got worse. Friday, my temperature had gone up, so I went to my new VA primary care, the Green Valley Clinic. I was seen by a doctor there within 10 minutes. He asked what tests were done, I said blood. He asked about a urine and x-ray tests and I said neither were done. So guess what, I returned to Tucson to have those done and by the time I returned to Green Valley, the results were ready. The doctor was concerned by a couple of the results and gave me medications and orders. The meds must have helped because Saturday my fever broke and I felt much better. I've improved and am near normal as I write this column. I do have concerns about the extremely old technology and software being used by the VA. If my situation had been critical, I'm not sure the VA could have helped me immediately. The really good part is that the majority of the VA employees were very helpful, especially the lab techs in Tucson, the nurse and doctor in Green Valley.