Picture archiving and communication systems: a systematic review of published studies of diagnostic accuracy, radiology work processes, outcomes of care, and cost

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Record Status
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Citation

Authors' objectives
Historically, VA has played a major role in the dissemination of information technology into medicine as part of its coordinated efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its health care delivery system. To support these efforts, the Office of Research & Development of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) requested that the Management Decision and Research Center (MDRC) define significant issues and frame potential future research questions related to the use of picture archiving and communication systems (PACS) in clinical settings. This document will also clarify for VA decision makers what is known, and not known, about the impact of PACS when used in a clinical setting.

Authors' conclusions
The evidence published to date is insufficient to provide definitive answers to the critical questions posed about the use of PACS in a clinical setting. Although data do suggest that the technology is improving, it has not yet been clearly demonstrated that PACS workstation imaging is equivalent to conventional film for the accurate primary diagnosis of all of the types of illnesses that present in the veteran population. Limited available data do suggest that some work processes are performed more rapidly in a PACS environment. It remains to be demonstrated that overall clinical and production processes are more efficient, or that those efficiencies translate into improved quality, increased access, or reduced cost of care. High quality studies of effectiveness, outcomes, and cost benefit are still needed.

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