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Attn: National Health/Medical Reporters, Political Writers
Re: Military's Evaluation May Mark End of Proven VistA EHR

**MILITARY HEALTH SERVICE MAY OPT TO REPLACE VISTA WITH EXPENSIVE,
PROPRIETARY SOLUTION**

*Decision Could Be Death Knell for Proven Technology that has Helped Cut Costs and Improve
Care at VA Facilities*

Expert Commentary Available

WHAT: This week, the Military Health Service is expected to decide on whether to dismantle its proven electronic health record (EHR) system, called VistA. Research demonstrates that VistA has improved VA productivity by 6 percent each year since 1999 and that, in a time of ever-rising healthcare costs, VA care has become 32 percent more affordable than it was in 1996. The organization has also achieved an unprecedented and unmatched prescription accuracy rate of more than 99.997 percent, making it a model for healthcare organizations everywhere. In fact, as *private* hospitals across the country strive to achieve the holy grail of automated, paperless environments (none has reached the mark yet), it is striking to note that every *public* VA hospital is already there thanks to VistA. Despite all of this, the Department of Defense (DoD) appears determined to systematically dismantle VistA and replace it with a proprietary solution that is expensive, difficult to implement and has limited interoperability with other systems. VistA advocates say the move makes little sense, economically or strategically—it is not in the best interest of our veterans, our working service men and women, or taxpayers who would have to foot the exorbitant bill.

Over the past 30 years, a community of open source users has developed VistA into a successful health care technology solution that works with existing hardware and software and preserves existing IT investments in more than 130 regional centers across the country. So why is the military fixing something that isn't broken? Ironically, the military tried to do something similar by installing a proprietary EHR system, named the Armed Forces Health Longitudinal Technology Application (AHLTA), in 2005. The solution proved to be expensive, difficult to install and incapable of working well with other systems. Now, it seems the DoD is heading down the same path again towards a "vendor-locked" solution that will cost billions up front and after implementation.

WHO: Michael J. Doyle, president and CEO, Rick Jung, chief operating officer, and Dr. Edmund Billings, chief medical officer, all of Medsphere Systems Corporation

As the foremost open source provider of healthcare information technology, Medsphere is revolutionizing the industry by delivering commercially supported software based on the VA's proven VistA EHR. Medsphere's OpenVista is now in use at more than a dozen healthcare organizations and enables hospital facilities to reduce operating costs and improve patient care more rapidly and inexpensively than other approaches. Private institutions certainly see the value and community investment made in VistA. Michael, Rick and Dr. Billings are experts in the field of healthcare IT with intimate knowledge of

the challenges of implementing EHR systems, the benefits of open solutions like VistA and the complexities (and politics) involved with the Military Health Service's decision.

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