

Never know who you will meet at the gym

Outlet: OIA Blog

By Neil Evans

It's not every day that I get to show off what my team is accomplishing to the CEO of a \$600 billion dollar enterprise. Yesterday, at 9 a.m. at the Palo Alto Health Care System, I met with Apple CEO Tim Cook. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be able to talk to him about VA, Veterans health care and the VA Mobile Health Provider Program. He was very engaged in the conversation, asked insightful questions and understands our unique mission.

After our discussion, the group of Apple executives in attendance, VHA leadership and Palo Alto HCS leaders met with a group of Veterans and then walked through the Mobile Health Provider Program delivery process. In Palo Alto alone, more than 600 providers received mobile devices. Mr. Cook talked to numerous clinicians along the way – including one he seemed to know better than the rest.



Apple CEO Tim Cook (center) helps a Palo Alto Health Care System health care provider navigate her new iPad. Photo courtesy of the Palo Alto Health Care System.

In what was perhaps the most entertaining part of Mr. Cook's visit, a Palo Alto HCS physician was checking in to receive her iPad and turned around and just spontaneously said hello to Mr. Cook in a very familiar way. They apparently work out at the same gym

every morning at 5 o'clock sharp. She never knew who he was, beyond being one of her early morning gym compatriots!

Since February 2014, VA Connected Health, in partnership with the Office of Information and Technology (OI&T), has been distributing mobile devices (iPads and Minis) to providers in the VA health care system. With the Palo Alto HCS deployment, we have distributed tablets to more than 5,000 at 12 VA medical facilities.

The program is designed to equip health care providers with mobile technology to enhance the way they deliver health care to Veterans. In the first phase, which is taking place currently, the mobile devices include VA email, VPN capabilities to allow secure remote connections, and access to commercial medical applications. The second phase (targeted for Fall 2014) will allow clinicians to load VA-developed mobile health (mHealth) apps onto their devices, allowing them to perform a variety of clinical activities, such as reviewing data from VistA, writing progress notes and eventually even entering orders.

My trip to California was a bit of a whirlwind. In fact, I just came back on the red-eye and am about to head over to the DC VAMC for clinic. But, as I reflect on yesterday's events, a moment that stands out was the conversation I had with Palo Alto HCS clinician Mary Goldstein. She found me at the end of the morning and was effusive in her praise of the VA Mobile Health Provider Program delivery process, and the fact that we actually had "clinicians talking to clinicians" about how to leverage mobile in their practices.



Apple CEO Tim Cook (far right) chats with members of VHA leadership and the VA Mobile Health Provider Program team. Photo courtesy of the Palo Alto Health Care System.

There is definitely excitement, both internal and external to VA, about what lessons will be learned as a growing community of VA providers through the VA Mobile Health Provider Program explore how mobile tools such as the iPad can augment their practice of medicine, of nursing, of social work, of physical therapy, etc.

I was very proud of the VHA-OI&T team yesterday. VA really sparkled. Tim Cook was very impressed and I couldn't be happier. By the way, I plan to spend more time at my local gym. You never know who you might meet!



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