

**TIMELY SCHEDULING OF SURGICAL PROCEDURES  
IN THE OPERATING ROOM**

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive describes the timely use of the Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA) Surgery Package for scheduling a surgical procedure to be performed in an operating room (OR) at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities with an approved VHA Surgical Program.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS:** This Directive defines the policy and responsibilities for scheduling a surgical procedure to be performed in an OR at a VA medical facility with an approved VHA Surgery Program.
- 3. RELATED ISSUES:** VHA Directive 2010-018, VHA Directive 2011-037, and VHA Handbook 1102.01.
- 4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The National Surgery Office (10NC2) is responsible for the content of this VHA Directive. Questions may be directed to the National Director of Surgery at 202-461-7130.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management (10N) Memorandum, Process for Scheduling a Surgical Procedure in the Operating Room, dated June 3, 2013, is rescinded.
- 6. RECERTIFICATION:** This VHA Directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of November, 2019.

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## TIMELY SCHEDULING OF SURGICAL PROCEDURES IN THE OPERATING ROOM

**1. PURPOSE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive describes the timely use of the Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA) Surgery Package for scheduling a surgical procedure to be performed in an operating room (OR) at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities with an approved VHA Surgical Program. **AUTHORITY:** 38 U.S.C. 7301(b).

### **2. BACKGROUND:**

a. The VistA Surgery Package must be used to schedule a surgical procedure to be performed in an OR at a VA medical facility with an approved VHA Surgery Program, whether an In-Patient Surgery Program or an Ambulatory Surgery Center.

b. The VistA Surgery Package allows the following options to schedule a surgical procedure in the OR:

- (1) “Make an operation request” for a specific surgery date, or
- (2) “Schedule operation” on a specific date and time.

c. The VistA Surgery Package was not originally designed to capture wait times for surgical procedures. Beginning in August 2011, enhancements to the VistA Surgery Package were released to allow capture of the initial date on which the VistA Surgery Package was utilized to schedule (or request to schedule) a surgical procedure. In Spring 2013, the National Surgery Office (NSO) verified that all VA medical facilities with an approved VHA Surgical Program had successfully implemented the VistA Surgery Package enhancements and that surgical wait time data could be extracted.

d. On June 3, 2013, the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management published a memorandum to the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Directors that established the following:

(1) An expectation that all surgical procedures performed in an OR would be scheduled in the VistA Surgery Package at the appropriate time. Specifically, the request to perform a surgical procedure is entered into the VistA Surgery Package on the date that both surgeon and the patient agree a surgical procedure is indicated. Scheduling a patient for a surgical procedure must follow performance and evaluation of indicated testing (e.g., cardiac catheterization) or medical consultations, but should not be delayed for routine preoperative testing or anesthesia evaluation.

(2) An understanding that all patients waiting for a surgical procedure are captured in the VistA Surgery Package, and not on any other electronic or physical list.

**NOTE:** VHA is evaluating a commercial software alternative to the VistA Surgery Package, the Surgery Quality and Workflow Manager (SQWM). SQWM replaces the surgical scheduling

*function of the VistA Surgery Package at the VA medical facilities at which SQWM is implemented. For the purpose of this policy, SQWM is equivalent to the VistA Surgery Package.*

**3. POLICY:** It is VHA policy that the VistA Surgery Package must be utilized in accordance with this Directive to schedule a surgical procedure to be performed in an OR at a VA medical facility with an approved VHA Surgery Program.

**4. RESPONSIBILITIES:**

a. **National Director of Surgery.** The National Director of Surgery is responsible for monitoring NSO reporting of overall VHA Surgery Program surgical procedure wait times beginning fiscal year (FY) 2015.

b. **Veterans Integrated Service Network Director.** The VISN Director is responsible for ensuring that VA medical facilities with an approved VHA Surgery Program within their VISN comply with this policy.

c. **Veterans Integrated Service Network Chief Surgical Consultant.** The VISN Chief Surgical Consultant is responsible for the following:

(1) Confirming that current surgical practice is in compliance with this policy, and

(2) Ensuring a regular review (no less than quarterly) of NSO reporting of surgical procedure wait times for each approved VHA Surgery Program within their VISN.

d. **VA Medical Facility Chief of Staff.** The VA medical facility Chief of Staff with an approved VHA Surgery Program must ensure the following:

(1) All provider and ancillary staff engaged in the scheduling of surgical procedures in the OR receive a copy of this policy, and

(2) All surgical procedures performed in the OR are scheduled in the following manner:

(a) The VistA Surgery Package is utilized to schedule (or request to schedule) a surgical procedure on the date that both surgeon and the patient agree a surgical procedure is indicated and all patient specific pre-operative testing (e.g., cardiac catheterization) or medical consultations have been completed, and

(b) No other electronic or physical list is utilized for the purpose of tracking a patient who has completed all but routine preoperative anesthesia evaluation or testing and is awaiting an OR date and performance of a surgical procedure.

***NOTE:*** Any patient that is entered into the VistA Surgery Package whose clinical condition later significantly changes or who requires additional work-up upon completion of routine preoperative testing or anesthesia evaluation may be cancelled from the VistA Surgery Package and scheduled at a later date with knowledge and agreement of the surgeon and the patient.

**5. REFERENCES:**

- a. 38 U.S.C. 7301(b).
- b. VHA Directive 2010-018, Facility Infrastructure Requirements to Perform Standard, Intermediate, or Complex Surgical Procedures.
- c. VHA Directive 2011-037, Facility Infrastructure Requirements to Perform Invasive Procedures in an Ambulatory Surgery Center.
- d. VHA Handbook 1102.01, National Surgery Office.
- e. Surgery V.3.0 Technical Manual/Security Guide available at: <http://www.va.gov/vdl/application.asp?appid=103>.

**6. DEFINITIONS:**

- a. **Operating Room.** An operating room (OR) meets the space design criteria established by the Office of Construction and Facility Management, is located in an inpatient surgical suite or ambulatory surgery center, and is supported by the OR nursing staff. For the purpose of this policy, an OR also includes a procedure room located outside of the inpatient surgical suite or ambulatory surgery center (examples: interventional radiology, cystoscopy suite) if routinely supported by the operating room nursing staff.
- b. **Surgical Procedure.** A surgical procedure is a surgical or invasive diagnostic procedure performed by qualified providers in an inpatient surgical suite or ambulatory surgery center supported by OR nursing staff. This definition includes surgical or invasive diagnostic procedures performed outside of the surgical suite (examples: interventional radiology, cystoscopy suite, procedure room) if routinely supported by operating room nursing staff.
- c. **Surgical Procedure Wait Time.** The Surgical Procedure Wait Time is defined as the number of days from the date on which the VistA Surgery Package was utilized to schedule (or request to schedule) a surgical procedure to the date on which the surgical procedure was performed.
- d. **Surgery Quality and Workflow Manager.** The SQWM is a software solution application being evaluated in Initial Operating Capability testing. SQWM is an approved alternate to the VistA Surgery Package for the purpose of surgical procedure scheduling.