

Semper Hi-Tech

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As a small group of US Marines come under fire in fierce house-to-house fighting through an all but deserted urban terrain, a frantic shout of “Medic!” rings through the air. Ducking for cover, a medic comes running with a bag of supplies and... a mobile device with the injured soldier’s health history.

This electronic health record (EHR) use case may be possible in the future, with the [Marine Corps Times](#) reporting that the first military EHR came online this February at Fairchild Air Force Base, near Spokane, WA.¹ The implementation was part of the larger Department of Defense EHR contract for \$4.3 billion with EHR vendor Cerner. Now, new recruits will be entered into the military’s system, called MHS Genesis, when they enlist, and their records will be electronic as long as they’re in the service.

Taking EHRs into field operations—where Marines by necessity need to be agile and leave a small footprint—is a little more complex than the typical EHR implementation. The military can’t take large servers and dozens of laptops with them, Commander Thomas Shu, chief information medical officer for the Marine Corps and leader of the Marine Corps’ EHR rollout in theater, told the *Marine Corps Times*.

Instead, the Marines intend to use small laptops and handheld devices that may have to work offline in danger zones, but can be reconnected to broader networks. The devices would let users chart combat casualty care, sick calls, and traumatic brain injury tests.

Shu noted that in the past, combat charting consisted of tape and a Sharpie marker to record what was done surgically on a patient. Any paper documents were transferred with the patient between theaters of care, frequently getting lost in the shuffle. This will change with the technology currently in development.

“By the time the casualty [injured soldier] gets stateside—two, three, four days later—his surgeons at Walter Reed can go into MHS Genesis and will see everything that was done,” Shu told the *Marine Corps Times*. “We owe it to our men and women that this all gets into their medical records.”

The move to EHRs likely has many military HIM professionals saying “Oorah!”

Note

1. Scott, Andrea. “[Pushing Medical Data Downrange](#).” *Marine Corps Times*. March 8, 2017.

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