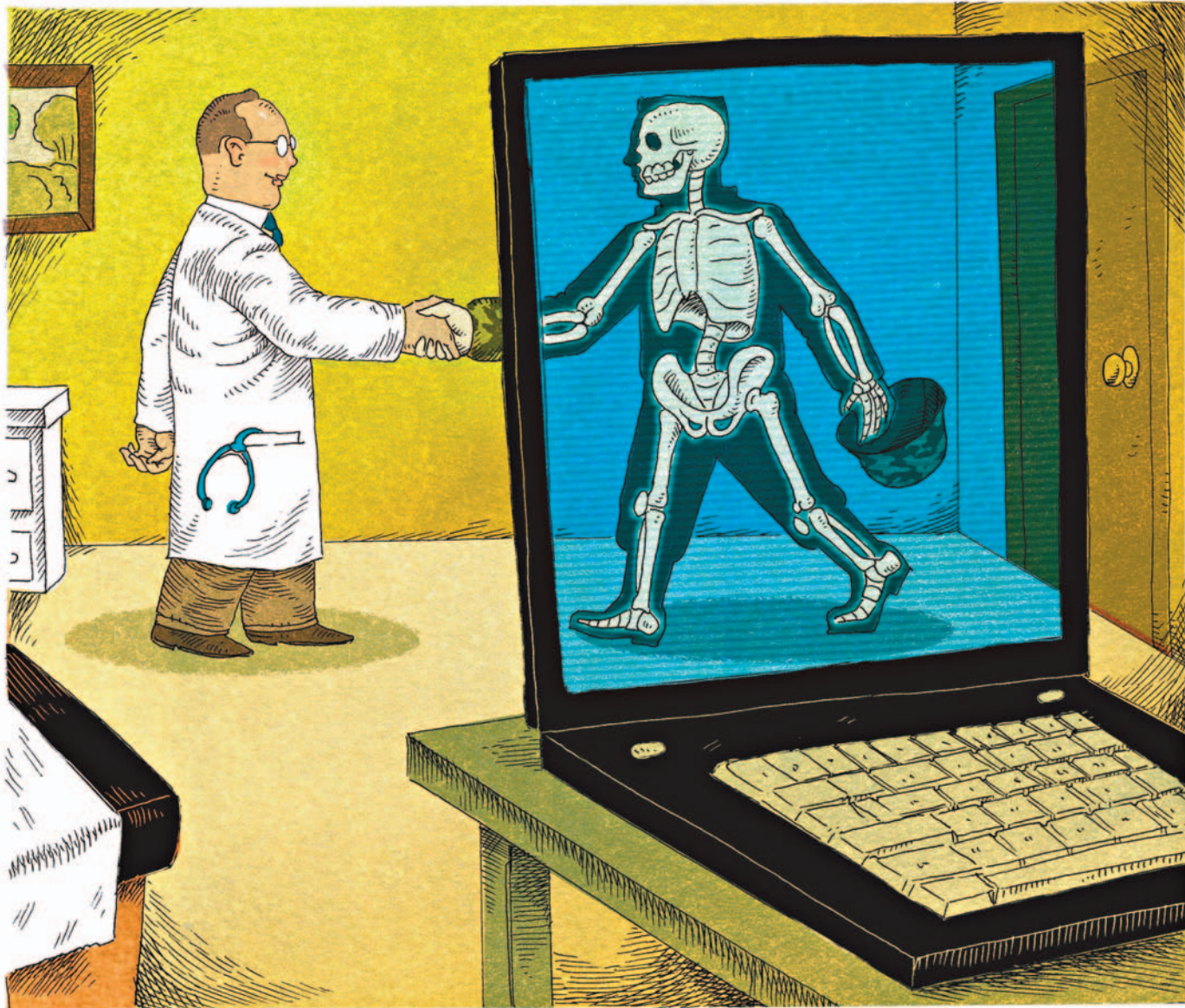


Government & Medicine

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DEPLOYING EMR

The Dept. of Defense is eager to lead the charge toward a universal electronic medical record system. Its progress could help you. **STORY BY DAVID GLENDINNING, ILLUSTRATION BY WESLEY BEDROSIAN**

Imagine this: A patient you've never met comes into your office after having last seen a doctor more than 6,000 miles away. But even before you speak to him, you know his complete medical history, from his allergies to the diagnosis from his last x-ray. • An automated reminder e-mail informs you the patient is due for a vaccination booster and a follow-up to some lab work that his previous doctor ordered months ago. When the patient's checkup is complete, all of the necessary evaluation and management codes for the visit are automatically compiled and ready to be sent electronically to the appropriate payer. Now the next physician to treat this patient will know everything that you've done without ever having to give you a call. • You might think this scenario is a long way off, but the U.S. military health system is already putting these concepts into practice. Advances that are occurring behind the scenes — as well as lessons that are being learned — could be

invaluable to doctors who don't have a military rank in front of their names.

The Dept. of Defense is a little more than a year into a 30-month effort to outfit its military treatment facilities with a next-generation electronic medical record system. Once the Composite Health Care System II (CHCS II) is in place, the records of more than 9 million people will reside in a central repository, immediately accessible to military physicians worldwide.

Physicians from Langley Air Force Base in Virginia to the Naval Medical Center San Diego are already cutting their teeth on the Defense Dept. system. Officials who are following its progress say the results are very encouraging. The effort has attracted the attention of several large health care systems, such as Mayo Clinic, Partners HealthCare System and Kaiser Permanente, which have initiated discussions with military health leaders in the hopes of possibly adapting parts of the system for their patients.

"There's a lot that we can share with the private sector ... that would be useful for their con-

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