

MHS Genesis Electronic Health Record (EHR) Adoption

On 23 January 2023, the NMRTU Groton Pharmacy went live with a new EHR—MHS Genesis.

What is it: MHS Genesis is a new commercial electronic health record, including a pharmacy record, that was contracted by the government for use at all military medical facilities—including National Guard and Reserve medical units, ships, and operational medical units—as well as Veterans Affairs medical facilities. It replaces several current medical systems including the pharmacy’s current record.

Why is this happening: Genesis is intended to improve patient safety through the use of a single modern record that replaces several disparate records that do not communicate with each other. It provides a single longitudinal record from the operational environment through fixed medical facilities and eventually the VA, which follows the patient through their service life and beyond.

What can I expect as a pharmacy patient: There are a few items of which users of NMRTU Groton Pharmacy (or any military pharmacy) will want to be aware:

Wait/service time: There is a learning curve with Genesis—which has nothing in common with our current system CHCS. While the pharmacy received approximately six hours of training a couple months before going live with Genesis, we expect that staff members will take some time to become proficient with the new system. Additionally, we are still using CHCS in addition to MHS Genesis for some patients, though this will gradually taper off. We expect longer wait times for approximately 4-6 weeks after go-live. Fortunately, our wait times are currently very low—patients spend an average of 12 minutes at the pharmacy—but implementation at other sites shows that wait times increase initially and then return to normal within 4-6 weeks. Please bear with our staff during this transition as we work to provide safe patient care using the tools we have.

Update: After the first week of using MHS Genesis, average total transaction times have already fallen from around 20 minutes to around 16 minutes. Prior to Genesis, the average transaction time was around 12 minutes—which was very fast compared to other military pharmacies.

Refills: Unfortunately, Tricare Online (TOL) does not interface with MHS Genesis and can no longer be used to request refills online. Refills must be requested using our Audiocare phone line at 877-211-1126. The DoD pharmacy community has requested that an online solution be made available for use with Genesis but to date the vendor has not been able to provide a solution. If/when an online solution is made available, our pharmacy will publicize it heavily. You will use your existing prescription number to request refills; however, your prescription will be converted to a new Genesis prescription number that you will use in the future.

Update: We have observed that MHS Genesis is very precise at compliance with TRICARE refill rules. Patients may call in a refill when 75% of the days’ supply has passed, but this is now down to the minute. Some patients have been told by Audiocare that they are calling in their refill too early and that they may refill it that day. This means that they may need to wait anywhere from a minute up to several hours before the refill will go through. We advise calling the next day or later in the evening if you receive this message. The pharmacy will not be able to manually push these early fill through either.

e-Prescribing: MHS Genesis has enhanced e-prescribing capability. With Genesis we can now accept e-prescriptions for controlled substances. In Connecticut e-prescribing of controlled substance is required by law unless the pharmacy is unable to receive them so we anticipate all controlled substances will be required to be e-prescribed. E-prescribing is safer for patients and faster for patients and the pharmacy, so we encourage e-prescribing of all prescriptions, as Genesis has more robust capabilities than our current ad-hoc interface.

Update: During the transition period, some prescribers may still be attempting to send e-prescriptions to our old system. They should update their e-prescribing information/software to our current site/system: DOD GROTON PHARMACY. While many prescribers have either faxed prescriptions in the interim, we have found that some prescriptions have simply not been sent because the old site can no longer receive them and is rejecting the prescriptions. Please have your prescriber update your favorite pharmacy name in your health record as well.

Formulary: Our formulary has expanded with MHS Genesis. While we cannot state at this time with 100% certainty that all medications on the TRICARE Uniform Formulary will be available, due to prior authorization rules, budgetary constraints, etc., we can say that nearly all of them will be.

Claims Adjudication: MHS Genesis implements real time claims adjudication, like what a pharmacy patient would expect at a civilian retail pharmacy, using TRICARE as an insurance plan. This doesn't mean that you'll be charged for your prescriptions, but the pharmacy is required to follow all TRICARE rules for prior authorization, quantity limits, etc. In some cases, this means that the pharmacy will be unable to fill your prescription until your prescriber approves clinical justification from TRICARE. In other cases, it means we will not be able to fill your prescription early unless the number of days (and hours/minutes) required by TRICARE have passed since it was last filled. In other cases, it may require that the pharmacy receive authorization from TRICARE to process a prescription early for a vacation—though there are never barriers to fills for deployments. Because the old pharmacy record was unable to enforce all TRICARE rules, the pharmacy had more latitude in these areas. In rare cases, your prescriber may need to take action with TRICARE for you to continue to receive an existing medication from the pharmacy, but we are working with TRICARE to minimize those events.

In summary, MHS Genesis will impact some patients in the receipt of their pharmacy services—especially in the first couple of months. In the long run, MHS Genesis is expected to improve safety and quality across the MHS—of which NMRTU Groton is just one small part. While some things are going to change, a lot of what you experience and what we do behind the counter will remain the same. Please bear with us as we all adapt to this new electronic health record.