

The "Green" Side of Patient Safety

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Summary

Automating traditionally paper-based documents enhances patient safety, improves workflow efficiency and lowers costs. Overlooked, however, is the environmental benefit. The Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, recognized with a State of Illinois Sustainability Award for creating "one of the greenest medical facilities in the nation," describes the environmental impact of electronic initiatives to enhance patient care.

Aim

Automate traditionally paper-based documents to improve patient care and reduce the environmental impact of documentation.

Safety Benefits

Preparing documents electronically offers significant potential patient safety benefits:

- The documents are immediately accessible in the EHR to any provider who requires access to them.
- Documents such as consents do not risk being lost or misplaced resulting in the risk of delaying a scheduled procedure while that document is located/replaced.
- Standardized documents ensure consistent processes between providers and help ensure that all aspects of the care plan are discussed with patients.
- The documents are legible – no handwriting issues or issues with poor photocopies.

Documents Saved Electronically Entire VA Health System

	2006	2011
Consent Documents	949,015	2,865,306
Non-Consent Documents	85,505	744,819

Documents Saved Electronically Jesse Brown VA Medical Center

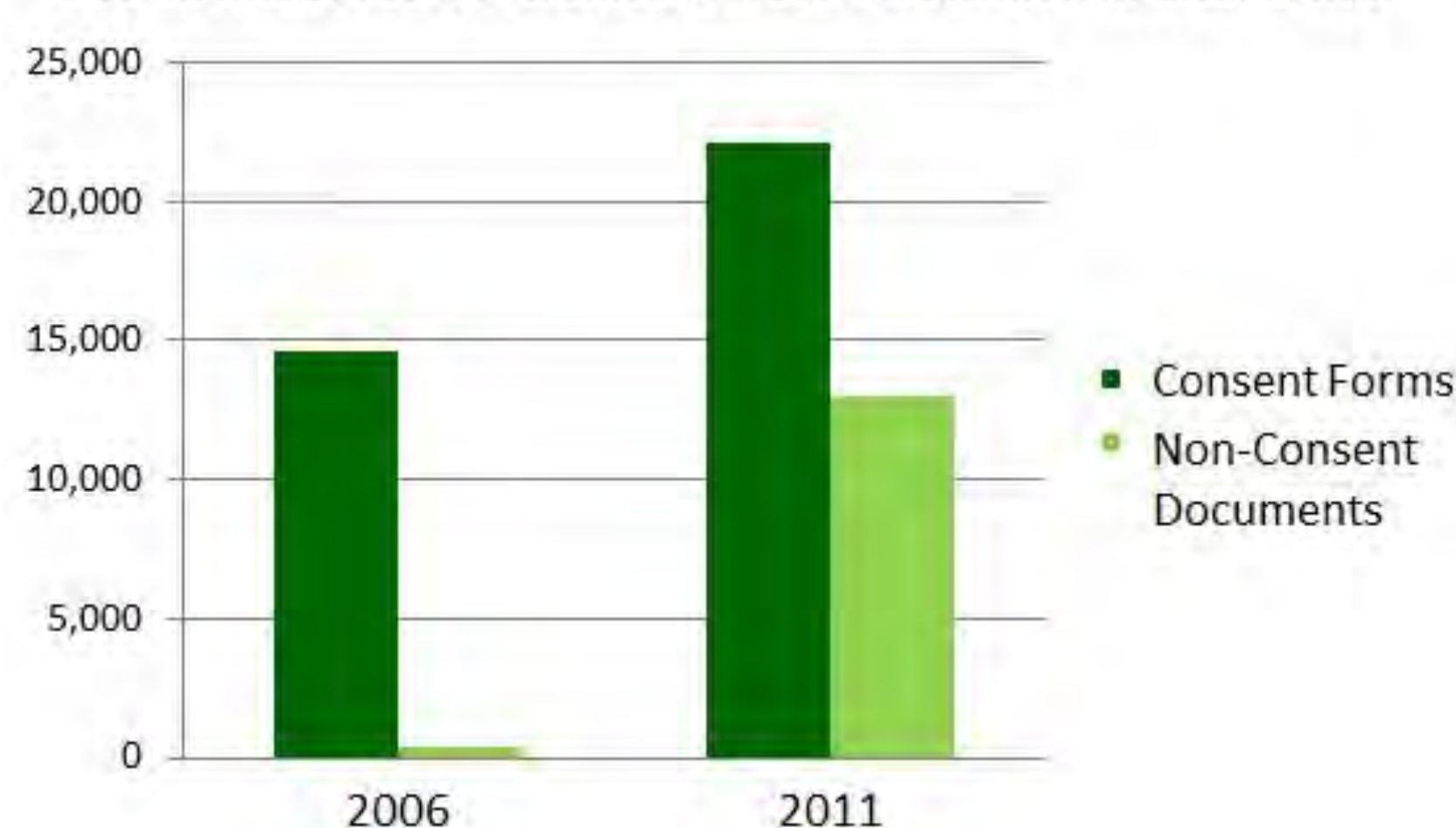
	2006	2011
Consent Documents	14,596	22,125
Non-Consent Documents	344	12,984

Actions Taken

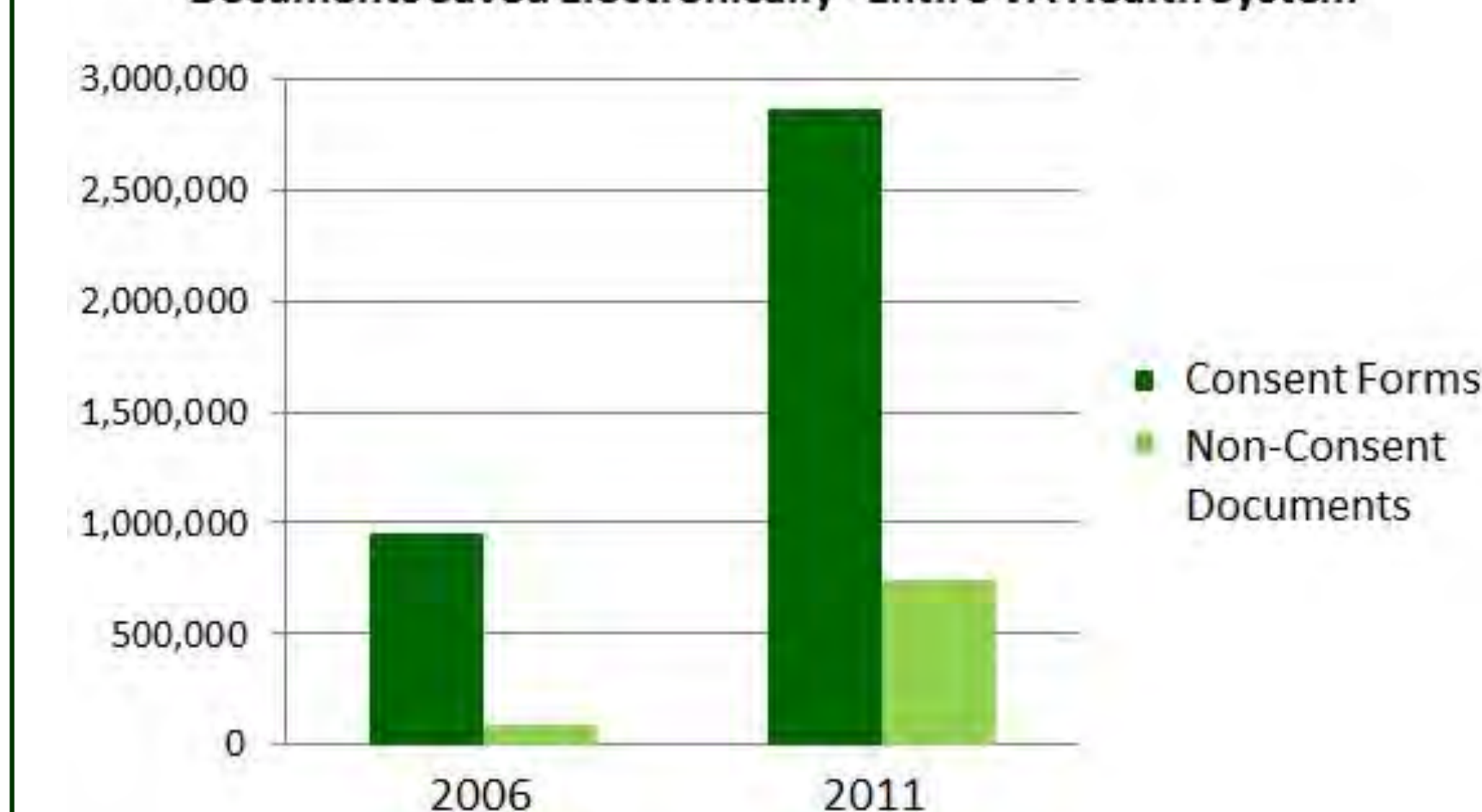
In 2004, the Department of Veterans Affairs introduced a national initiative – the Electronic Support for Patient Decisions Initiative – to deploy an Electronic Informed Consent Application (EICA, the iMedConsent™ application, Dialog Medical, Atlanta, GA) across all VA medical centers. In addition to generating procedure-specific consent forms, the Jesse Brown VAMC employed the EICA beyond its originally mandated use to automate numerous other patient documents ranging from mental health forms to state-specific forms (e.g. State of Illinois Application for Voluntary Admission).

When a document is produced in the EICA, a note detailing the provision of that document is automatically placed in the patient's Electronic Health Record (EHR, VistA CPRS). Simultaneously, an image of the document is automatically placed in the facility's document management system (VistA Imaging). This automatic placement of the document in VistA Imaging eliminates the need to print a paper copy of the document for inclusion in the patient's medical record.

Documents Saved Electronically - Jesse Brown VA Medical Center



Documents Saved Electronically - Entire VA Health System



Results

Using the EICA system to eliminate document scanning saved 15 trees in 2011 at the Jesse Brown VAMC and over **1,600** trees in 2011 across the entire VA Healthcare System. In addition, moving from a traditional, paper-based process to an electronic process typically results in improved clinical workflow.



This is your planet



At our facility alone, the work to automate consent forms and dozens of other documents has abolished the need to print and subsequently scan into the EHR an enormous number of paper documents.

In 2006 non-consent documents accounted for only 6 percent of all documents stored electronically by the EICA in the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center. By 2011 that value had climbed to 37 percent – double the national average for all VA facilities.