The Department of Veterans Affairs activated its "Fourth Mission" in response to the national emergency brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The department mobilized to support health care systems around the country and continued to support its veterans through increased technological capabilities including telehealth.

VA CIO Jim Gfrerer discusses how the agency quickly pivoted its information and technology operations to respond to the crisis and how he sees recent
advancements continuing to make impacts.

The Department of Veterans Affairs earlier in the pandemic prepared an agency-wide plan to reorganize the Veterans Health Administration to best care for COVID-19 patients and contain the spread of the new virus. Its four phases involved training, a reorganization of VHA care facilities, rallying resources like telehealth to support remote capabilities and fostering a continuity of operations. The agency also implemented a rigorous demand for collection and dissemination of health information across the agency, both to direct its current actions as well as inform subsequent activity in the case of future epidemics.

Gfrerer stresses the importance the agency places on both information and technology, emphasizing that it supports not only the infrastructure to enable remote and digital experiences to patients (like chatbots or self-serve capabilities on va.gov), but also delivering information as a service (like its National COVID-19 Report Summary biosurveillance tool).

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