

The program uses 88 full-time nurses to collect data on all major surgery in the VA, which is transmitted to the program database in Chicago. The "very rich database" contains more than 500,000 cases, he relates, and generates annually a detailed report for each surgical service at the VA.

The program has published more than 17 publications about the NSQIP data and, within the coming year the program will be accessed through the Internet.

VHA had certain advantages as it implemented the outcome assessment program, he explains. First, the agency's uniform clinical and administrative database and software program—the Decentralized Hospital Computer Program, now known as VISTA—has permitted the NSQIP to access a consistent surgical scheduling module and operating room log in every VAMC to identify all operations performed in operating rooms throughout the country and to centralize the data so that the surgical nurse reviewers enter uniform data.

However, the NSQIP risk models and outcomes may have a few limitations, he cautions, because they may not be generalizable to populations dissimilar to veterans. Further, to reduce the data collection burden for the nurse reviewers, operation- and subspecialty-specific patient risk factors are not collected for non-cardiac surgery.

A final limitation, Dr. Khuri notes, is that the outcomes measured in the NSQIP currently are restricted to the adverse occurrences of postsurgical mortality and morbidity, and length of stay.

"There is a lot of interest now, not just among the VA surgeons, but among the surgical community outside of VA," Dr. Khuri contends, especially with modern medicine's current emphasis on managed care and cost containment.

"VA has completely adopted this," Dr. Khuri proudly notes, and "it is leading the world in the use of risk-adjusted outcomes."

"We think that the NSQIP is providing models that are leading the way towards the qualification of quality of surgery and the ability to compare the quality of care at various institutions using risk adjusted outcomes," Dr. Khuri declares.

Results of the National VA Surgical Risk Study were published as to lead three articles in the October 1997 issue of the *Journal of the American College of Surgeons*, and a full description of the NSQIP will be published in the upcoming October issue of the *Annals of Surgery*.

TRIBUTE TO BILL SHIELDS FOR HIS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO THE CONGRESS AND THE NATION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, it is a privilege to pay tribute to Bill Shields of the Department of Defense, who is retiring after two decades of impressive service to the Nation. He is an outstanding attorney whose intellectual skills and dedication have helped to maintain and improve our country's military.

Bill is a native of Buffalo, New York. He received his BA and JD degrees from the University of Buffalo, and a L.L.M. from the National Law Center at George Washington University.

Bill then served in a number of legal positions in the Department of Defense, including assistant in charge of a legal office in Florida, counsel for an air station in Maine, and international law attorney in Japan.

I first met Bill in 1987, when he joined my staff as a Congressional Fellow with the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources. As Chairman of that Committee I was extremely impressed with Bill's work on the Polygraph Protection Act and the Minimum Wage Act. He spent endless hours researching these issues, drafting the statutory language, and preparing witnesses and Senators for hearings. His efforts were indispensable in obtaining enactment of those two critical pieces of legislation.

After leaving the Committee, Bill served as Deputy Assistant for Civil Affairs and as Deputy Director of the Appellate Government Division in the Department of the Navy, and excelled in both assignments.

In 1993, he became Legislative Counsel in the Secretary of the Navy's Office of Legislative Affairs. In that position, he worked closely with us on the Senate Armed Services Committee on key issues such as acquisition reform, the A-12 aircraft contract termination, and the Seawolf submarine.

In 1994, Bill was appointed as Counsel and Special Assistant for Legislative Affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. In that position, he has been deeply involved in issues such as research and development, test and evaluation, acquisition policy, major weapons systems, and intelligence. Bill was primary liaison with Congress for the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology, the Director of Defense Research and Engineering, the Director of Test Systems Engineering and Evaluation and the Director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency.

In this capacity, Bill worked with Senators and staff on a daily basis to ensure the effective use of scarce defense resources during a period of major defense restructuring. He was responsible for overseeing the authorization of \$67 billion of the annual DOD budget for such projects as the F/A-18, F-22 and Joint Strike Fighter aircraft, the New Attack Submarine, the Comanche helicopter, numerous medical research projects and the Technology Reinvestment Program. On all of these issues, Bill's leadership, intelligence, and integrity have contributed significantly to the readiness and ability of our troops in the field.

Congress and the nation owe a debt of gratitude to Bill Shields. His skillful leadership will continue to have a lasting impact on our national security for years to come. It has been an honor to be associated with this exceptional public servant. His distinguished service will genuinely be missed, both in the Pentagon and in Congress.

All of us who know Bill are grateful for his leadership and his friendship. We wish him every success in his new position as General Counsel for the American College of Radiology. We know that his wife Maryann, and his three children, Andrew, Molly and Brian, are proud of him as he reaches

this special milestone, and all of us in Congress are proud of him too.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, October 7, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,533,657,715,092.27 (Five trillion, five hundred thirty-three billion, six hundred fifty-seven million, seven hundred fifteen thousand, ninety-two dollars and twenty-seven cents).

One year ago, October 7, 1997, the federal debt stood at \$5,413,433,000,000 (Five trillion, four hundred thirteen billion, four hundred thirty-three million).

Five years ago, October 7, 1993, the federal debt stood at \$4,399,633,000,000 (Four trillion, three hundred ninety-nine billion, six hundred thirty-three million).

Ten years ago, October 7, 1988, the federal debt stood at \$2,617,036,000,000 (Two trillion, six hundred seventeen billion, thirty-six million).

Fifteen years ago, October 7, 1983, the federal debt stood at \$1,384,688,000,000 (One trillion, three hundred eighty-four billion, six hundred eighty-eight million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion—\$4,148,969,715,092.27 (Four trillion, one hundred forty-eight billion, nine hundred sixty-nine million, seven hundred fifteen thousand, ninety-two dollars and twenty-seven cents) during the past 15 years.

HONESTY IN SWEEPSTAKES

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. President, today I want to take a few moments to let my colleagues in the Senate and House of Representatives know about the progress we have made in promoting Honesty in Sweepstakes during the 105th Congress.

Over the past month, the Honesty in Sweepstakes Act of 1998, S. 2141, made excellent progress as it was refined and polished. These refinements reflect the valuable input I received from witness testimony and my fellow Senators during a Governmental Affairs Subcommittee hearing on S. 2141. The newest Honesty in Sweepstakes language also reflects the results of numerous productive discussions and negotiations with interested parties, including the Postal Service, the industry, the AARP and consumer protection groups.

I want to thank my colleagues, Senator THOMPSON and Senator COCHRAN, who as the respective Chairmen of the Governmental Affairs Committee and the International Security, Proliferation and Federal Services Subcommittee, have been helpful and gracious in their efforts to help me move this sweepstakes reform legislation during the 105th Congress. I also want to thank my good friend, Senator COLLINS, who cosponsored my original Honesty in Sweepstakes bill and provided valuable input that is reflected in the new language I am talking about today.