

Full 2013

VETERANS' HEALTH CARE ADVANTAGE

THE WELLNESS MAGAZINE FOR NEW YORK/NEW JERSEY VETERANS



VA
HEALTH
CARE

Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century

NETWORK DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Veterans,

The Affordable Care Act, also known as the health care law, was created to expand access to coverage, control health care costs and improve health care quality and care coordination. The health care law does not change VA health benefits or Veterans' out-of-pocket costs. Three things that Veterans should know:

- VA wants all Veterans to receive health care that improves their health and well-being.
- If you are enrolled in VA health care, you don't need to take additional steps to meet the health care law coverage standards.
- If you are not enrolled in VA health care, you can apply at any time.

VA has launched a new website, www.va.gov/aca, to let Veterans know what the Affordable Care Act means for them and their families. Veterans receiving health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs will see no change in their benefits or out-of-pocket costs when portions of the Affordable Care Act take effect next year.

VA wants all Veterans to receive health care that improves their health and well-being. If Veterans are enrolled in VA health care, no additional steps are necessary to meet the health care law coverage standards. If Veterans are not enrolled in VA health care, they can apply at any time.

To enroll in VA's health care system and receive world-class care:

- Visit your local health care facility.
- Call 1-877-222-VETS (8387).
- Visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll

VA's health care system has no enrollment fee, no monthly premiums and no deductibles. Most Veterans also have no out-of-pocket costs, though some may have small copayments for some health care or prescription drugs.

For information about VA health care and the Affordable Care Act, Veterans and family members should visit www.va.gov/aca, or call 1-877-222-VETS (8387), Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. or Saturdays from 11a.m. to 3 p.m., Eastern Time. The website includes a Health Benefits Explorer, where Veterans can learn about the benefits they can receive if they enroll in VA care.

Michael A. Sabo, FACHE
VISN 3 Director

WE'RE JUST A PHONE CALL AWAY

Veterans, do you have questions about your health?

During weekdays (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), staff at your VA Medical Center or VA Clinic are available to assist. After 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, weekends or holidays, call the VA Nurses helpline at **1-800-877-6976** if you have a medical question.

Remember to call 911 at any time if you're having a medical emergency.

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WEBSITE

www.nynj.va.gov



“Veterans are proven performers. They distinguished themselves in uniform and they distinguish themselves as employees. They will help all of us achieve our missions.”
- Secretary Eric K. Shinseki

The employees of VA's New York/New Jersey Veterans Health Care Network honor the sacred pledge that military service members and veterans have made to protect our nation, and they and caregivers across VA are more committed than ever to helping veterans thrive with excellent care and with assistance in finding meaningful, rewarding jobs.

VA for Vets, a website with employment and career management resources, offers veterans the tools they need to launch or advance their civilian careers with VA.

VA for Vets offers:

- The most thorough military skills translation and career matching services for Veterans seeking employment;
- A current calendar of vocational and job events across the country;
- Professional development and deployment lifecycle support for current Veteran and Military Service Member employees; and
- Online training and personalized services for the supervisors, HR professionals, hiring managers and coworkers who work with our Veteran employees each and every day.

Go to <http://VAforVets/VA.gov> and see how VA for Vets is helping veterans with careers and much more.



JAMES J. PETERS VA HOSTS VALENTINES FOR VETERANS 2013

During the week of February 10-16, the James J. Peters VA Medical Center celebrated the 35th Annual National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans. The National Salute is a week-long celebration of special thanks that occurs during the week marked by Valentine's Day. During this time, VA Medical Centers across the country invite local celebrities, elected officials and school children to visit Veterans and to bring them some Valentine's Day cheer. This year, the Medical Center hosted Miss USA, Nana Meriwether, the Children's Chorus of PS 83 and State Senator Jeff Klein.

"The National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans gives everyone a chance to let our Veterans know just how very much they are appreciated," said Medical Center Director, Dr. Erik Langhoff, "We're excited to welcome Miss Meriwether, our PS 83 students and Senator Klein. Their participation just heightens the celebration and brings a special note of cheer to our Veterans."



Miss USA shares Valentine's Day cards and gifts with our CLC Veterans.



Miss USA, Nana Meriwether, and student choir of PS 83 in the Bronx.



Medical Center Director, Erik Langhoff, MD, PhD.



Miss USA, Nana Meriwether, addresses the Veterans of our Community Living Center.



Miss USA, Nana Meriwether and WW II Veteran, Joseph Benardo.

Langhoff said he hopes visitors will also learn more about the important roles volunteers play at the medical center throughout the year and perhaps pursue volunteer opportunities.

"Our medical center's 360 volunteers are an important part of our health care team and donate over 80,000 hours of their precious time to our Veterans. The National Salute program is a great way for people to learn more about helping the Veterans we serve," Langhoff said. "Visitors are surprised at how varied our volunteer opportunities are."

Individuals interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities within VA are encouraged to call the office of Voluntary Services at 718.584.9000, ext. 5473 or 5474.



CHOLESTEROL AND HEART DISEASE

Lisa Ganguzza, Dietetic Intern at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center

According to the American Heart Association, 98.8 million Americans have high cholesterol. High cholesterol is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease – the #1 cause of death in the United States. High cholesterol levels lead to the buildup of plaque in the arteries, which can be dangerous. Similar to a clogged pipe, this buildup impairs blood flow and puts a person at higher risk for heart attack and stroke.

There are several risk factors for cardiovascular disease – some are modifiable, while others are not. The risk factors that we cannot change are our age, gender, and heritage, including genetics and race. The good news is that for most people, high cholesterol is a modifiable risk factor that can be reduced by not smoking, increasing physical activity, and modifying diet. Whether you currently have high cholesterol or not, making lifestyle changes is a preventative measure to reduce your risk of a cardiovascular event.

Following a heart-healthy diet is key to preventing and reducing high cholesterol. A diet low in saturated fat, trans fats, and cholesterol, and high in fiber-rich fruits, vegetables, and whole grains is recommended. Sources of saturated fat, trans fats, and cholesterol include: animal products (high fat meats), fried foods, whole milk, and many baked goods. Scientific research has shown an association between dietary fiber intake and a reduction in LDL (bad) cholesterol levels. To ensure adequate fiber intake: eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day and choose whole grains.

The FDA approved that 3 grams of soluble fiber from oats a day, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease. This means having just $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of oats to make your oatmeal, as part of your heart-healthy diet, may work to reduce your cholesterol! Oatmeal is a great source of fiber that will keep you satisfied, and promote bowel regularity, with the added benefit of soluble fiber to help reduce LDL cholesterol levels. Mix your oatmeal with water, fat-free, or 1% milk – try adding chopped fruit and cinnamon – and enjoy!



VA HUDSON VALLEY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Clinical Video Telehealth: The Future is Now

"To provide the right care, at the right time, in the right place"

Veterans can take advantage of high-tech medical care through VA Hudson Valley Health Care System (VA HVHCS).

No longer will Veterans need to travel long distances for health care services only available at certain locations! VA HVHCS can bring care closer to you. Telehealth makes it possible for the VA to bring specialist care directly into the home and the local community. Instead of Veterans having to travel to get care, the care they need is often able to come to them.

Telehealth is similar to a Skype video chat and FaceTime, except with much better picture quality and by using certain medical equipment. At VA HVHCS, telehealth takes place in three ways:

1. Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT)

Clinical Video Telehealth offers an instant connection between a Veteran in one location with a health care professional in another location. This video technology makes it possible for Veterans to come to one of VA HVHCS's community-based outpatient clinics or VA Medical Centers and connect with a health care professional, who may be in at another location many miles away.

2. Care Coordination/Home Telehealth (HT)

Care Coordination/Home Telehealth encourages Patient Self Management by making healthy connections with Veterans, caregivers, families and the health care team. Home Telehealth is a program into which you are enrolled and someone is available to help you coordinate your care using the latest health technology. With a case manager, you would use Home Telehealth technologies to facilitate access to care and to improve your health. The goal is to provide the right care in the right place at the right time.

3. Store-and-Forward Telehealth (SFT)

Store-and-Forward Telehealth allows hospital staff to take a detailed picture and share that picture with medical specialists who may be miles away at another VA facility. This gives Veterans' access to specialty eye care, dermatology, pathology and wound care using pictures taken by a health care professional and then forwarded to another health care professional for specialist review.

The telehealth cart has screens for two-way viewing, pieces for looking at the ears, eyes, nose and throat, and contains a small camera for taking close-up photos of a patient's skin. For example, a health care professional will be able to listen to your heart and lung sounds over the telehealth cart. The technician will hold a stethoscope up to your heart and hear it. The technician can also hold a small camera to

your ear or throat so that he/she can look inside them. The picture quality is actually clearer than if the health care professionals were there, looking inside themselves.

Other examples of using telehealth include:

- Cardiology - You can visit a community clinic in one location and a cardiologist at another location can have a follow up appointment with you.
- Nephrology - You can have a visit with the Bronx VA Nephrologists from the Castle Point location.
- Psychiatry - You can be in one location while you have a follow up appointment with your health care professional in another location.
- Pharmacy - You can have medication questions answered by a pharmacist rather than calling, being on hold or having to come in.

The telehealth option is especially appealing as we embrace new technology. Veterans can use their time more effectively – by cutting down on travel. With working and school, many Veterans can't always take time off for an appointment. Telehealth has become a new option and a big time saver for many Veterans.

Why should a Veteran have to drive two hours to the VA Medical Center for a follow up appointment that will take 15 minutes?

If you are a user of VA Hudson Valley Health Care System and you would like more information, please ask about telehealth services at your next visit, or call 845-831-2000, x5774. You can also email Frank.Amoruso@va.gov for more information.

Visit our new VISN 3 Virtual Health page! <http://www.nynj.va.gov/virtualhealth.asp#home>

Current CVT services include:

- Mental Health
- Nutrition & Diet
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Dermatology
- MOVE Program (weight management)
- Polytrauma
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Pre-op consults (in development)
- Post-op consults (in development)
- Smoking Cessation
- And more to come



VA Hudson Valley Health Care System earns National Recognition as "Top Performer on Key Quality Measures™" from The Joint Commission



VA Hudson Valley Health Care System (HVVHCS) is one of nineteen Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities from across the Nation recognized by The Joint Commission as top performers on key health care quality measures for 2011/2012.

As a Top Performer, VA HVHCS is among the top 18 percent of all Joint Commission accredited hospitals that achieved this recognition. While all 152 VA medical facilities are accredited by The Joint Commission, the list recognizes facilities that are the top performers based on The Joint Commission's review of evidence-based care processes that are closely linked to positive patient outcomes.

"We at VA are very pleased with The Joint Commission recognition. We are proud of the medical facilities that made

this list, proving VA's commitment to providing the high-quality care our Veterans have earned through their service," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "This achievement demonstrates the hard work that each and every VA medical staff member undertakes to serve Veterans."

"This remarkable achievement is another indication of the wonderful and compassionate care our staff strive every day to provide to our Nation's heroes. Our Veterans deserve the very best," said Gerald Culliton, Director of VA Hudson Valley.

The annual report, found at: <http://www.jointcommission.org>, summarizes the performance of more than 3,300 Joint Commission accredited hospitals on 45 accountability measures of evidence-based care processes closely linked to positive patient outcomes.



Support And Family Education (SAFE) Program

Do you have a family member or friend who has served in the Armed Forces, has emotional problems or has experienced trauma? You are not alone...

VA Hudson Valley Health Care System (VA Hudson Valley HCS) has launched a weekly series of educational workshops on a range of mental health topics designed to bring together family and friends of those who served in the military. The program, called Support and Family Education (SAFE), is being held at both the Montrose and Castle Point campuses over the next 16 weeks.

The goal of the SAFE Program is to help family and friends of those who served in the Armed Forces learn about mental health topics and/or trauma their loved ones may have, or currently are, experiencing. The workshops are confidential, free of charge, and no RSVP is needed.

Here are the details and schedule of upcoming workshops:

WHO: Open to family and friends of those who served in the Armed Forces, RSVP not needed, free of charge, confidential

WHEN: 4:30 - 6:15 PM 2013 Schedule (See website)

WHERE: VA Hudson Valley Health Care System
FDR Montrose Campus (FDR), Bldg 15, Rm 16
Castle Point Campus (CP), Bldg 19, Rm 100

A schedule of upcoming workshops is listed on VA Hudson Valley HCS website: <http://www.hudsonvalley.va.gov/programs/SafeInternetServices.asp>

For more information, contact Elana Fine, LCSW, at 914-737-4400, x-3436 or visit the VA Hudson Valley Health Care System website at www.hudsonvalley.va.gov.

VA NEW JERSEY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Volunteer today!

The VA Voluntary Service Program at the VA New Jersey Health Care System has a variety of volunteer activities just for you. In addition to weekdays, evening and weekend opportunities are also available. The program fulfills a national commitment to care for and enhance the lives of America's Veterans.

Our devoted volunteers and corporate participants offer ongoing support to brighten the lives of the men and women who fought so bravely to preserve our freedom. Many of our volunteers bring their diverse backgrounds and unique skills to their volunteer assignments, while others bring a desire to learn and explore, always finding the experience beneficial.

You're encouraged to join our VA Voluntary Service team and discover the satisfaction you'll receive by "earning your stripes." Your participation makes a difference and it's guaranteed that volunteering will be memorable and rewarding.

For more information

If you're interested in becoming a volunteer, contact Mary Beth Hynoski, Voluntary Service Program Manager at the Lyons Campus at 908-604-5814 or Tyrone Steed, Voluntary Service Program Manager at the East Orange Campus at 973-395-7258.

For more information, you can visit <http://www.newjersey.va.gov/giving/index.asp>.



Valley Brook Village Progress

VA New Jersey Health Care System is proud to share the progress on the building of our enhanced use lease project, Valley Brook Village, which is scheduled to open this summer.

The enhanced-use lease was signed on August 9, 2012. The project consists of 61 units of permanent supportive housing for homeless and at-risk Veterans and their families. Valley Brook Village will provide supportive services designed to help Veteran residents achieve self-sufficiency and permanent housing. The project contributes to the Veterans Affairs' mission of ending homelessness among homeless and at-risk Veterans.

Features include:

- 12.88 acre parcel of land located at the Lyons Campus
- 61 units of permanent supportive housing and 1 live-in responder unit
- Three new two- and three-story buildings
- Indoor and outdoor recreational areas
- 70 parking spaces
- Sustainable design
- Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant
- 57,000 gross square feet



The Role of the Mind in Healing

In recent years, medical science has started to measure the effects of Mind-Body Modalities. The health benefits are becoming more evident, to the extent that many health insurance companies encourage their members to participate in yoga, tai chi and meditation as part of a well-rounded healthy lifestyle.

As more emphasis has been placed on the role of the mind in healing the body, as well as the ways the body can help to heal the mind, major medical centers have started to offer guided imagery, relaxation therapy and reflexology to their patients. These modalities are often called Complementary and Alternative medicine, (CAM), but a more accurate term might be Holistic therapy or Integrative healthcare, that is, working with both the mind and body to achieve healing outcomes.

Northport VA Medical Center received a grant from VA's Office of Cultural Transformation to train professional staff in various Mind-Body Modalities. The grant author, Richelle Rapaport, RN, MSN AHN-BC, is a board certified clinical specialist in psychiatric mental health nursing as well as board certified in advanced practice holistic nursing.

With the support of the grant, she has been able to bring to the Northport several nationally respected experts in Reiki Relaxation, Tai Chi Easy, Clinical Meditation and Holistic Nursing to train VA staff, who have been very receptive to learning these new skills.

In order to help the clinicians incorporate these skills in daily patient care, the grant included the hiring of a contract Integrative Holistic Healthcare Coordinator, Mary Chereskin, RN MSN, who is also a board certified clinical specialist in psychiatric-mental health nursing.

Ms Chereskin works directly with the newly trained staff to provide guidance and encouragement to build competency

in these mind-body skills. In addition, she maintains communication with other VA centers offering CAM therapies to veterans. Also, Ms. Linda Hacker, a certified yoga instructor and Reiki practitioner, was hired as Program Assistant, to manage the inventory of equipment and supplies purchased to assist in implementing the grant.

Northport VA Director Phillip Moschitta initiated a facility wide effort to bring improved service to veterans in a friendly environment based on the internationally recognized program Planetree. The grant was part of this effort and has led to several renovations to increase mental calmness through relaxing visual additions, healing music, and aromatherapy.

Each of the holistic therapies is important in addressing the stressors that often cause illness, and the symptoms of disorders such as pain, anxiety and insomnia. The modalities included in the grant are Clinical Meditation, Integrative Imagery, Reiki Relaxation, Aromatherapy, Music Therapy, Reflexology and Tai Chi Easy.

The modality is selected by the practitioner and the veteran, noting personal preferences. Relaxation is the primary goal. Some veterans preparing for surgery can benefit from listening to an audio guided imagery session to reduce anxiety. Veterans who are experiencing symptoms of anxiety or pain are taught clinical meditation that allows them to "hit the pause button" when feeling overwhelmed so they can regain control. It has been documented that regular practice of Tai Chi can improved balance, reduce hypertension, and improve joint function for those with arthritis, to name a few health benefits. It also helps to quiet the mind and improve focus.

The next phase of this grant will be to collect data and evaluate the effectiveness of our innovations. Come to Northport VAMC to heal body and mind!



Vietnam Wall Brought Recognition and Healing

Last fall, over 350 veterans on motorcycles escorted the Dignity Memorial® Vietnam Wall to Northport VA Medical Center, where, for six days, thousands of Long Islanders gathered to see and touch the monument and to remember and honor all of America's military men and women who served and sacrificed in Vietnam.

While the 240-foot, 3/4-scale replica of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, DC has visited over 200 sites across the country, this was the first time the wall has been hosted by a VA Medical Center. The picturesque Vietnam Veterans Memorial Garden, which was donated by the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapters on Long Island in October 2010, proved to be the ideal setting for the Wall's visit to Northport. In fact, the Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter

11, funded the additional construction of a permanent blue and limestone stage and patio for the Wall's visit to Long Island's only VA Medical Center.

Although open to the general public 24 hours-a-day for three days (Oct 28-30), countless numbers of veterans made private pilgrimages to the Vietnam Wall in the days before its official opening. Day and night, Vietnam veterans and veterans of other eras quietly visited the Wall to remember, to honor, and to find healing.

Welcome home and thank you, Vietnam Veterans. And thank you to all veterans and volunteers who assisted in bringing the Wall to Northport VAMC. This was one of our finest moments!





VA New York Harbor prevails before and after Hurricane Sandy

Recognizing the facility's vulnerability to Hurricane Sandy, VISN 3 and VA Medical Center leadership decided to evacuate the Manhattan Campus, as weather forecasts were increasingly predicting a westward shift of the storm and landfall in the New Jersey/New York area. The facility safely evacuated one hundred twenty seven inpatients on that cloudy Sunday. Using contracted ambulances and ambulettes, patients were evacuated with staff to neighboring VA facilities in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Montrose. The facility was closed at 6 p.m.

On Monday, October 29, the violent storm impacted the entire metropolitan area, knocking out power, phones and other utilities, bringing the city to a halt. A 14-foot surge pounded the Manhattan facility. The ground floor of the 23rd Street Campus was completely destroyed by a 14 foot surge of water. The East River waters deluged the basement and sub-basement, causing catastrophic damage to major utilities, fire suppression systems, the MRI and thousands of square feet of clinic space.

Once the city began to function, a pharmacist and physician occupied the lobby to assist any Veterans who reported to the site. Meanwhile, Centralized Scheduling staff notified patients directly of appointment cancellations, while the Internet and media reported the temporary closure of the facility. A Call Center was set up to take calls from Veterans with questions, an Emergency Medication Refill Program was established, and Congressional offices, city offices and state offices were contacted.

In addition, clinics at the Brooklyn campus and community based outpatient clinics remained closed until Thursday, November 1. On Monday, November 5, all staff was required to return to work. Those whose duty station was the Manhattan Campus reported to either the Brooklyn VA or St. Albans Community Living Center or another VISN 3 facility and received work assignments. Staff utilized a shuttle from the Manhattan Campus to the Brooklyn Campus and carpooled with each other, as a gas shortage and slow restoration of public transportation made things difficult.

As the only hospital in the neighborhood evacuating prior to the storm, ambulances and transport vehicles lined up on First Avenue to evacuate VA patients to other facilities.



A patient checks out of the Manhattan facility and is transferred to a neighboring VA hospital with the help of VA staff on Sunday, October 28.



ASSESSING THE DAMAGE

A Disaster Assessment Team from VA Central Office was on site within days of the storm, reviewing the damage and working with Harbor staff to figure out how to put the pieces back together. A NY Reactivation Team was established, led by the Associate Director, and immediately began working to de-water the facility, eradicate mold and clean and demolish damaged areas of the first floor and basement.

The Team also worked with Con Ed to restore steam and electric to the Campus and worked with the Northport VA Fire Department and FDNY to restore water in the water tank at the Manhattan Campus. The Team assessed all utilities and found that generators, fire suppression, the MRI and switch gears needed to be replaced. The NY Reactivation Team managed over 35 contracts to complete this work.

The Team was charged with finding new space for clinical services previously operating in the 150,000 square feet of space lost on the ground floor. Formerly leased space on two floors was converted into Primary Care Clinic space. An additional 90,000 sq. ft. of administrative offices on the 9th floor was relocated to allow for additional space for Primary Care.

While work to clean up the damaged areas on the ground floor and basement was underway, additional sites were established to provide care to NY City Veterans displaced by the closure of the Manhattan VAMC. Neurosurgery and Cardiac Surgery and Catheterization began at

Brooklyn VAMC and an inpatient unit was established at the St. Albans Community Living Center. Additional outpatient clinics were established at the Brooklyn and Bronx VAMCs, Harlem and Chapel Street CBOCs and St. Albans CLC. Dental and dialysis care was provided in health care facilities in Manhattan.

Even while technically closed, Urgent Care was provided at the front entrance of the Manhattan Campus, along with psychiatry for patients who presented to the facility in crisis. Two Mobile Health Units were parked in front of the facility and a shuttle transported Veterans to the Brooklyn and Bronx VAMCs.



Following the storm, the ground floor of the hospital was gutted, mold mitigated, and everything thoroughly cleaned.

The storm completely destroyed the clinical areas on the ground floor, including SPD.



SERVICES RESUME

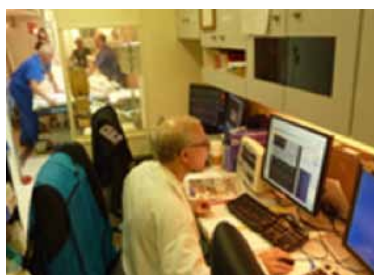
Outpatient care began to be phased in on March 4 and completely reestablished in mid-April. All inpatient care units, Surgery and the Emergency Department were fully operational in mid-May.

Staff from VA New York Harbor, other network VA medical centers, VISN3, network contracting and VACO staff worked tirelessly for several months to recover and restore the Manhattan Campus. Despite the effects of Superstorm Sandy, VA staff banded together to continue to serve Veterans with minimal interruption. Comprehensive planning and sustained project management ensured that the facility resumed the delivery of ambulatory care in 168 days and full inpatient care in 200 days.

Goodbye, Sandy. Nice try, but nothing can keep VA – or New York – down.



From the left, Dr. David Goldfarb, Chief of Nephrology (Manhattan campus), Navy Veteran Renee Bryant-Benson, and David Smith RN, Dialysis (Manhattan campus) reunite post-Sandy. In the immediate aftermath of the storm, Dr. Goldfarb and his staff called each dialysis patient to ensure they were safe and healthy and made arrangements for their continued treatments.



Dr. Steven Sedlis in the Mobile Catheterization Lab at the Brooklyn Campus, which was added to manage the patient need for cardiac cath while the Manhattan Campus was being reestablished.

Romaine Johnson welcomed many additional staff to the Chapel Street CBOC, including Dr. Marion Eakin. The CBOC became a hub for mental health care during the temporary closure of the Manhattan Campus.

The displaced NY Primary Care Team began treating patients in a space at the Bronx VA.



MYHEALTHEVET AND TELEHEALTH MAKE LIFE EASIER FOR VETERANS

Virtual Health Care brings Veteran patients even closer to their health care teams



- My HealtheVet is an Internet based Personal Health Record created by the VA for our Veterans.
- It is accessible 24/7 worldwide through the Internet.
- It gives the Veteran the ability to refill their prescriptions
- It gives them the ability to see their appointments, Wellness Reminders, Labs and Contact their Primary Care Team (PACT) directly with a Non-Emergency message with an In-Person Authenticated (IPA) Account.

In order for them to take advantage of MHV, they must complete a three step process.

1. They must register on MHV. They can do this on any computer that has internet access.
2. They must complete the IPA process, complete and sign a Release of Information specifically for MHV and present it to a staff member (CBOC or Main Campus) with a government ID.
3. They must then log on to their MHV account and Opt in to Secure Messaging. This simply means that they agree to the terms and conditions for using Secure Messaging.

To register, go to www.myhealth.va.gov In order to take full advantage of the system, the Veteran must be In Person Authenticated, which can be done at their medical center. Enrollment can also be completed at the medical center, said Denise Horton, Coordinator of the My HealtheVet program at VA New York Harbor Healthcare System, which sees Veterans at facilities in Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan and Staten Island. She also cautions Veterans to enter their personal information on the web site exactly as it appears on their Veteran Identification Card. For more information or to get help registering, call Ms. Horton at 212-686-7500 ext. 7687.

For information on Telehealth, contact Minu Simon at (718) 526-1000 ext. 2438.

If you like online banking, you are going to love MyHealtheVet (MHV). Like on-line banking, it's the way to go, according to an increasing number of Veterans and the clinicians who serve them.

Veterans can manage their health care and view their personal health records for free through the constantly expanding online program. Using the online system, Veterans enrolled in a VA facility can refill their VA prescriptions, get wellness reminders and view medical appointments and lab results. The system is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week wherever there is Internet access.

Veterans also ask questions of their primary health care team members through secure messages and receive answers within 72 hours.

Nurse Practitioner Catherine Glasser, NP, usually has to let the phone ring without picking it up when she's treating a patient. But, with secure messaging available to patients who've signed up for this service through MHV, the frustration of long waits for answers, or repeated calls is a thing of the past.

"I can't answer all the phone calls, but providing private, secure messages with answers in between (appointments) works well for me and patients," said Glasser. She said that while she receives messages forwarded by the nurse manager on topics like blood test results and the side effects of medications, it simply makes sense that questions about scheduling appointments go to the clerk in charge of the task.

Glasser added that the technology supports the VA's Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) approach to health care, making it possible for each specialized member of the provider team - including pharmacist, nurse, physician and nutritionist - to have the opportunity to respond easily to questions that matches their expertise.

These days, most of the secure messages she receives are from working Veterans who want to know the results of diagnostic tests. But, as there are no limits on the number of Internet interactions or on the type of healthcare questions that may be asked, secure messaging offers the opportunity for other types of support.



For example, Glasser explains, a patient with terminal cancer and lung disease who is homebound and unable to come in to VA regularly really benefits from MyHealthVet. “Secure messaging to check up on this patient and the Internet gives him a way to connect with the world,” said Glasser. “And it allows me to be supportive.”

Enter TeleHealth.

Telehealth uses health informatics, disease management and telehealth technologies to target care and case management to improve access to care, improving the health of veterans. Telehealth changes the location where health care services are routinely provided.

For technology to work, it must work for the people it is meant to help - patients and the professionals providing care. Telehealth in VA helps ensure veteran patients get the right care in the right place at the right time and aims to make the home into the preferred place of care, whenever possible. The heart of the Home Telehealth Program offered here at New York Harbor stems from the use of the Health Buddy, a device that works with a modem and/or a land line to transmit important health information daily to Care Coordinators who relay the information to providers. Many of our Veterans are also utilizing Cardiacom (IVR) Interactive Voice Response services to transmit data through the use of a cell phone. This is the device of choice for our active Veterans without a land line, it transmits important health information daily to providers from home to VA.

“The Home Buddy System is a blessing for those who need special care in watching out for their own health well being,” said Veteran Michael Olivencia, a Telehealth patient. “I was able to trace something about my health from getting worse. Using the Health Buddy System, I was able to record my weight, blood sugar, heart beat and blood pressure. For about a week, my blood pressure was reading below 100. The Care Coordinator called me to warn me of such signs of lower blood pressure.”

Armed with this information, Olivencia monitored his blood pressure for the next week. “I decided in was time for me to check into the nearest hospital. As it turned out, the medications I was taking had to be adjusted, and my blood pressure then began to show signs of improving. My well-being was improving. Today, I am doing well, because the Home Buddy System helped me stay alive, and watch for my well being.”

Signing up for MyHealthVet is easy and fast and can be done when you come in for your next appointment.



PHANTOM SOUNDS IN OUR EARS

Wallace Meres, Au.D, CCC-A

Do you hear high-pitched buzzing sounds? Or maybe a ringing, roaring, hissing, chirping, whooshing or wheezing? Is the sound can be high or low, single or multi-toned, an occasional mild annoyance or a constant din? If you hear one or more of these sounds, you could have tinnitus. Tinnitus isn't a condition by itself but usually a symptom of an underlying condition, such as brain injuries and hearing loss.

It is estimated that over 50 million Americans at least occasionally experience tinnitus, pronounced TIN-i-tus. Two million find tinnitus so disturbing that it interferes with sleep, work, concentration and family relationships.

Tinnitus is also the No. 1 service-connected disability among veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq, due to brain injuries and acoustic trauma from explosive devices. While many sufferers are told there is no cure for their tinnitus, treatment options are growing. New brain-imaging studies have shown how some peoples' brains are wired with unusual connections between the auditory cortex that governs hearing and the centers for attention, emotion and executive function.

The first step in treating tinnitus is usually to determine if you have hearing loss and to identify the cause, which can run the gamut from ear-wax buildup to infections, accidents, aging, medication side effects, caffeine intake and noise exposure. Many experts believe that when people lose the ability to hear in certain frequencies, the brain fills the void with imaginary or remembered noise—like phantom limb pain for sound. Hearing aids are often prescribed if hearing loss is present.

Today there are more and more treatments available. If you are experiencing tinnitus, speak with your primary provider about a referral to an Audiologist.

If you hear sounds – contact your primary care provider about a referral to an Audiologist.

Do you hear –

- **Ringing?**
- **Roaring?**
- **Hissing?**
- **Chirping**
- **Whooshing or wheezing?**

These could be signs of tinnitus.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND US – ANYTIME



VA HUDSON VALLEY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

MEDICAL CENTERS:

Montrose Campus
Route 9A/P.O. Box 100
Montrose, NY 10548-0100
(914) 737-4400

Castle Point Campus
Castle Point, NY 12511
(845) 831-2000

COMMUNITY CLINICS:

Carmel
1875 Route 6
2nd Floor
Carmel, NY 10512
(845) 228-5291

Monticello
55 Sturgis Road
Monticello, NY 12701
(845) 791-4936

Port Jervis
150 Pike Street
Port Jervis, NY 12771
(845) 856-5396

New City
345 North Main Street
New City, NY 10956
(845) 634-8942

Pine Plains
Eastern Dutchess
Community Clinic
2881 Church Street,
Rt. 199
Pine Plains, NY 12567

Goshen
30 Hatfield Lane,
Suite 204
Goshen, NY 10924
(845) 294-6927



JAMES J. PETERS VA MEDICAL CENTER

130 West Kingsbridge Road
Bronx, NY 10468
(718) 584-9000

COMMUNITY CLINICS:

White Plains
23 South Broadway
White Plains, NY 10601
(914) 421-1951

Yonkers
124 New Main Street
Yonkers, NY 10701
(914) 375-8055

Queens
47-01 Queens Blvd.
Sunnyside, NY 11104
(718) 741-4800



VA NORTHPORT (LONG ISLAND) MEDICAL CENTER:

79 Middleville Road
Northport, NY 11768
(631) 261-4400

COMMUNITY CLINICS:

Bay Shore
132 East Main Street
Bay shore, NY 11706
(631) 754-7978

East Meadow
2201 Hempstead
Turnpike, Building "Q"
East Meadow, NY 11554
(631) 754-7978

Patchogue
4 Phyllis Drive
Patchogue, NY 11772
(631) 754-7978

Riverhead
300 Center Drive,
Griffing Building
Riverhead, NY 11901
(631) 754-7978

Valley Stream
99 South Central Ave
Valley Stream, NY 11580
(631) 754-7978



VA NEW JERSEY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

MEDICAL CENTERS:

East Orange Campus
385 Tremont Avenue
East Orange, NJ 07018-1095
(973) 676-1000

Lyons Campus
151 Knollcroft Road
Lyons, NJ 07939
(908) 647-0180

COMMUNITY CLINICS:

Brick
970 Route 70
Brick, NJ 08724
(732) 206-8900

Elizabeth
654 East Jersey Street, 2A
Elizabeth, NJ 07206
(908) 994-0120

Hackensack
385 Prospect Ave
Hackensack, NJ 07601
(201) 487-1390

Hamilton
Plaza 1
3635 Quakerbridge Road
Hamilton, NJ 08619
(609) 570-6600

Jersey City
115 Christopher Columbus Dr
Jersey City, NJ 07302
(201) 435-3055

Morris Plains
340 West Hanover Avenue
Morristown, NJ 07960
(973) 539-9791;
(973) 539-9794

Paterson
11 Getty Avenue
Building 275
Paterson, NJ 07503
(973) 247-1666

Piscataway
14 Wills Way
Piscataway, NJ 08854
(732) 981-8193

Tinton Falls
The Atrium
55 Gilbert Street, Bldg. 4
Tinton Falls, NJ 07701
(732) 842-4751



VA NEW YORK HARBOR HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

MEDICAL CENTERS:

Brooklyn Campus
800 Poly Place
Brooklyn, NY 11209
(718) 836-6600

New York Campus
423 East 23rd Street
New York, NY 10010
(212) 686-7500

St. Albans VA Primary and
Extended Care Center
179th Street & Linden Boulevard
St. Albans, NY 11425
(718) 526-1000

COMMUNITY CLINICS:

Brooklyn
40 Flatbush Ave.
Extension 8th Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201
(718) 439-4300

Staten Island
1150 South Avenue
3rd Floor, Suite 301
Staten Island, NY 10314
(718) 761-2973

Harlem
55 West 125th Street
11th Floor
New York, NY 10027
(646) 273-8125