



VA MID-ATLANTIC HEALTH CARE NETWORK • VISN SIX

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“Excellent Care – Earned by Veterans – Delivered Here”

Voices of VISN 6

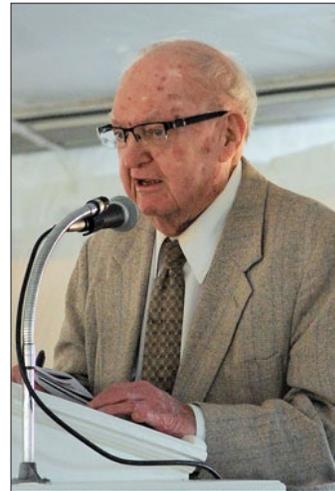
Official news from around *your* VISN

February 28, 2014

Continuing To Enhance Access Throughout The VISN

The work to increase access to VA health care in North Carolina got off to a great start in 2014 as officials from VA, the state and local governments gathered in a chilly tent Jan. 24 to kick off the construction of the new Kernersville Health Care Center (HCC).

Hundreds braved the cold weather to hear how the 40-acre plot of dirt located across from the Kernersville Medical Center, will soon be transformed into a state-of-the-



L-R: Kernersville Mayor Dawn Morgan, Congressman Howard Coble and Congresswoman Virginia Foxx address the crowd at the ground breaking ceremony for the Kernersville VA Health Care Center, Jan. 24.

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Ready Or Not, ICD-10 Is Coming

Much has been written about leveraging technology and shiny new hardware to enhance health care, but little has been shared with regard to how medical data, which also plays a huge role in health care, is collected, analyzed and shared locally, nationally and even internationally.

On Oct. 1, the International Classification of Disease 10 (ICD-10) officially replaces ICD-9, which has been in effect for more than 30 years.

While most people may not be familiar with this international medical coding system, virtually everyone will be impacted by it.

The ICD code set is

developed, monitored and copyrighted by the World Health Organization, which is the authority for health within the United Nations system.

The WHO is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends.

The ICD is the foundation for the identification of health trends and statistics globally and is the standard for defining and reporting diseases and health conditions. The

ICD allows the world to compare and share health information using a common language.

According to the WHO, the ICD defines the universe of diseases, disorders, injuries and other related health conditions, listing them in a comprehensive way so that everything is covered.

It organizes information into standard groupings of diseases, which allows for:

- Easy storage, retrieval and analysis of health information for evidenced-based decision-making;
- Sharing and comparing health information

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From The Director

Access! Access! Access!

Some people have accused me of sounding like a broken record, always talking about increasing access... and that's okay, because it doesn't matter how great our health care is if our Veterans cannot take advantage of it.

Increasing geographic access to Veteran's throughout our area has been one of this VISN's major strategic goals for the past decade. The effort has been an unqualified success and I'm proud of what we've accomplished.

Over the last 10 years, we have methodically worked to make access a reality for thousands of Veterans who in the past had found VA health care simply a road too far to travel. We identified the obstacles to access by spending hours looking at where Veterans live and the infrastructure of the highways they travel. With the groundbreaking for the new CBOC in Sanford, we have essentially closed the gap, making VA health care available within a one hour drive to almost all Veterans in our region.

Within the triangle of service provided by the Fayetteville, Durham and Salisbury VAMCs is a rural area with no easy routes to any of these facilities. Building a clinic in Lee County makes VA primary care and mental health care a real option for the thousands of Veterans residing in the area encompassing Lee and portions of Randolph, Montgomery, Moore, Harnett and Chatham counties.

I'm also excited about getting started on the new Kernersville Health Care Center. As frigid as the day was, we had a great turnout for the groundbreaking. The construction in Kernersville follows that of the HCC in



Fayetteville and will soon be joined by the Charlotte HCC when we break ground there on March 28. Additionally, with a groundbreaking for a larger replacement clinic in Jacksonville, N.C. slated for March 21, being part of VA health care has never been better!

On Page 1, we included an article about coding records, which on the surface may not sound all that interesting, but when you dig a little deeper, it's really amazing. The International Classification of Disease, version 10, (ICD-10) is how the World Health Organization is able to chart trends in diseases, illnesses and treatments.

The level of detail provided by ICD-10 has blossomed. Health care systems around the world are moving from using 14,000 codes to document illnesses and diseases to this updated system that incorporates more than 69,000 codes. This level of additional detail will provide the World Health Organization almost real-time data that can be shared quickly and efficiently with more than 100 countries. This collaborative effort helps identify potential health risks, epidemics, pandemics, and even treatment options that have the best track record.

ICD-10 becomes effective here in the United States on Oct. 1. There will be no exceptions to this implementation date. The challenge is to ensure everyone is trained before the end of September. I've made this training a priority throughout the VISN. We have teams at each medical center facilitating training and ensuring we make it available to all appropriate personnel.

I also want to spotlight the first-ever North Carolina Women Veterans' Summit and Expo to be held in April. Time and time again, we encounter women Veterans who are unsure of the benefits they have earned. Next month, we will bring together teams from VHA, VBA, the Vet Centers, the state and local communities to give women Veterans a one-stop-shop for all things related to their status of being a Veteran.

This is truly a remarkable effort and one that we hope will grow into regional events in the future. I'll close by asking that everyone help spread the word about this event through every forum, every friend and by every means. America's mothers, daughters, and sisters should be given every opportunity to attend this event and they can't attend if they don't know about it.

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Questions or comments about the newsletter, e-mail Bruce. Sprecher@va.gov or call 919-956-5541.

Excellent Care — Earned by Veterans — Delivered Here
Voices of VISN 6
Official news from around your VISN

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Bataan Death March Survivors Meet One Last Time At Asheville

By Scott Pittillo
Asheville VAMC public affairs

Every day, America loses thousands of men and women who played a major role in this nation's history—our Veterans of World War II. It is important that this nation remembers and honors what our World War II Veterans accomplished and the legacy their pain and suffering provides for this country.

VHA's mission is to honor service by caring for "those who have borne the battle...." The Asheville VAMC staff takes great pride in this mission and recently had the honor of being part of a special occasion for two members of one of the most exclusive groups of Veterans, the "Battling Bastards of Bataan." On Feb. 21, Veterans Victor Lear and Wayne Carringer were reunited in the medical center on the occasion of Lear's 91st birthday.

Lear and Carringer were members of the U.S. Army forces fighting in the Philippines on the Bataan Peninsula during the early days of World War II. They endured months of intense combat, tropical heat, disease and starvation. On April 9, 1942, the U.S. forces, short of resources and fiercely outnumbered, were surrendered to the Japanese. On that day, nearly 12,000 Americans and 63,000 Filipinos became Prisoners of War. What followed was one of the worst atrocities in modern wartime history—the Bataan Death March.

After the surrender, the survivors endured a brutal march of about 80 miles without food or water. At the end of the march, they found themselves in some of the worst prison camps encountered in any war. With little running water, sparse food, no medical care, and terrible sanitation, malaria, dysentery, beriberi and a host of other diseases swept through the crowded camps.

POWs began to die at the rate of four hundred per day. By the time Japan surrendered and the U.S. Army liberated the Bataan Prisoners of War, two-thirds of the American prisoners had died.

Originally from Florida, Lear retired to Clay County, N.C., just a few miles from where Carringer, a Graham County native, lived. Both men were able to live long productive lives after the war. Lear worked as a carpenter and raised a family.

Though Lear was able to transition from soldier to civilian after the war, his son David Lear says his military training never left him. He laughed as he showed a picture of his father with a .45 caliber pistol strapped to his walker.



Scott Pittillo

L-R: Wayne Carringer visits with fellow Bataan Death March survivor Victor Lear on his 91st birthday Feb. 21, at the Asheville VAMC.

Lear celebrated his 91st birthday at the medical center with a visit by Carringer who presently resides in the Community Living Center here.

Carringer's visit was their second meeting. Lear and Carringer met for the first time just a few years ago. Lear said Carringer sent him several letters before they finally had the opportunity to meet at a Veterans event in Graham County.

"It thrilled me inside," Lear said of seeing Carringer on his birthday, "... knowing that he had gone from where he was, (during the war) to where he was now, you realize you are a member of a few who survived the Death March."

"It's an honor to have seen him," said Carringer on being able to attend the birthday event. "I was just glad to see him again before he passed away."

Lear passed away a couple of days after his birthday. The staff at the medical center share that they are proud of what they do for all Veterans, and were especially privileged to have been able to care for a survivor of the Bataan Death March.

Speaking on behalf of all employees at the medical center, CGVAMC Director Cynthia Breyfogle said, "It was an honor to be able to be in the same room as these two American heroes and it's an honor to be able to serve them."



Beckley's Mobile Outpatient Clinic Opens For Business

By Debbie L. Voloski
Beckley VAMC public affairs

Veterans and dignitaries converged Feb. 18 in Bluefield, W. Va., to celebrate the opening of the Beckley VA Mobile Outpatient Clinic. The 38-foot-long mobile clinic was funded by the VA's Office of Rural Health and will provide primary care to approximately 1,200 Veterans living in Mercer County and the surrounding region.

"This is a big day for the Beckley VA Medical Center" stated Karin McGraw, director of the Beckley VAMC, as she introduced the staff, a physician, registered nurse, and licensed practical nurse, along with a medical support assistant who also serves as a driver. We are committed to increasing the ability of Veterans living in southern West Virginia to take advantage of VA health care," she added.

During the ceremony, U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall said, "I appreciate VA officials for being responsive to the concerns of local Veterans and their families. The mobile clinic is a major first step toward increasing access to veterans' care in Mercer County and the surrounding area and I hope that our Veterans will make full use of these new services, which is the best way to demonstrate the need for future VA investments."

Governor Earl Ray Tomblin, Sens. Jay Rockefeller and Joe Manchin sent representatives to deliver their words. The Governor's representative delivered the message, "This is truly an exciting day for the Veterans of this area." Senator Rockefeller's letter said he was honored "to work on behalf of the men and women who chose to put our country, our freedom, and our people first," and that "supporting the nation's Veterans and making sure they have the services they need should be an unending effort."



Debbie Voloski

L-R: Congressman Nick Rahall poses with the Mobile Outpatient Clinic staff, Carmie Estep, Dr. James Smith, Abike Solademi, R.N., Beckley VAMC's Director Karin McGraw and Shelton Trail, LPN.

"The mobile health clinic is truly on the cutting edge of delivering quality health care, and we are so proud to have it located here in southern West Virginia," Senator Manchin stated in his congratulatory letter. He went on to say VA has made great strides in providing health care to those Veterans living in rural areas.

After a ribbon cutting ceremony, Veterans and other guests toured the mobile clinic and learned more about its services.

Navy Veteran of World War II and the Korean War, Joe Wheby, 88, of Princeton stated, "I'm so happy it's here. We fought for it a long time and we're going to make good use of it. If we don't, we'll lose it."

VISN Facilities To Offer Wi-Fi

By Jeffery Melvin
Fayetteville VAMC public affairs

The Fayetteville VAMC now offers Veterans and visitors free wireless internet or "Wi-Fi", in most outpatient clinic waiting areas, in the Emergency Department Waiting Room, the Community Living Center Dayrooms and the Veterans Canteen Service Dining Room/Retail Store Area.

To date, all of our sites have offered some limited capability. The VISN has allocated funds to expand that coverage for patient and guest Wi-Fi networks in all eight medical centers and new Health Care Centers.

When completed, this multi-year project will provide patients and guests with internet access similar to access found in hotels, restaurants, or coffee shops.

At Fayetteville, the new Wi-Fi service allows patients and visitors with Internet enabled devices to surf the web while they are waiting for clinic appointments, medication refills, dining in the canteen or while getting a beverage from the Patriot Brew.

Inpatients at the Fayetteville VAMC can also keep in touch with family and friends during hospital stays by using the free Wi-Fi service to read e-mail and access social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

Patients can bring their personal laptops or mobile

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ICD-10 continued from Pg 1

between hospitals, regions, settings and countries;

- Data comparisons in the same location across different time periods.

ICD users include physicians, nurses, health workers, researchers, health information managers, policy-makers, national health program managers and insurers which is why it is also used for clinical documentation and billing.

According to the WHO, ICD-9 no longer meets the demands of the health care industry. It does not match current clinical vocabulary and is inconsistent with today's medical practices.

ICD-10 is neither an American, nor a VA coding convention. It is a global one and as such, on Oct. 1, 2014, the entire U.S. health care industry will join the 114 countries who have already adopted this more detailed classification system.

According to the WHO, it is vital that the U.S. health care data represent current medical conditions and have the ability to quickly and accurately identify new threats such as anthrax, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Monkey Pox.

One of the many positive aspects of the new classification system will be that the data can be used for external peer reviews and because of the intense level of detail, data gained from the system may be used to more quickly identify threats of epidemics or pandemics.

According to Dr. Mark Shelhorse, VISN 6 chief medical officer, "From an epidemiology standpoint, the data may provide clinicians and researchers the ability to identify which interventions and treatments are the most effective for specific diseases and patients leading to positively enhanced outcomes and in some cases perhaps increasing the very odds of survival."

ICD 9 included 14,025 diagnoses. ICD-10 includes more than 69,000. ICD-9 included 3,824 procedures. ICD-10 includes more than 71,000.

These changes require that everyone who has anything to do with coding patients' charts such as those involved with billing, performance metrics, data collection, Medical Center Allocation System (MCAS), and Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA), receive training. "Transitioning to ICD-10 requires training... a lot of training," said Dan Hoffmann, VISN 6 director.

According to Sitara Jones, VISN 6 compliance officer, more than 175,000 VHA employees require ICD-10 training.

VHA's Office of Informatics and Analytics Health Information Management has been working since 2009 to prepare VHA's workforce for the new system.

VISN 6 established a steering committee to provide oversight to each medical center, and each VAMC established teams of their own who are responsible to help clinicians and staff through the transition with training provided in person and via computers in a variety of formats.

"It is imperative that we get this right and that everyone gets the training they need to be successful on Oct 1," said Hoffmann. "This is not something that anyone learns in a day, so each facility has made a commitment to provide the training hours they need to ensure everyone has the opportunity to complete the training."

Jones explained that there is not a singular "one-size fits all" training program. The clinicians and staffs at the clinics do not experience the same issues that a surgeon at a poly-trauma center will, so the training has specific modules for certain specialties.

Who is the WHO and what do they do?

When diplomats met in San Francisco to form the United Nations in 1945, one of the things they discussed was setting up a global health organization which provided the genesis for the World Health Organization. The WHO's Constitution came into force on April 7, 1948.

Some work done by the WHO is visible and familiar: the response teams sent to contain outbreaks, the emergency assistance to people affected by disasters, or the mass immunization campaigns that protect the world's children from diseases.

One of WHO's proudest achievements is the eradication of smallpox in the late 1970s— a disease which had maimed and killed millions. The campaign to eradicate the deadly disease throughout the world was coordinated by the WHO between 1967 and 1979.

Since its launch in 1988, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative has reduced the number of cases of polio by more than 99 percent.

Overseen by the WHO, more than two billion children have been immunized by more than 20 million volunteers and health workers. As a result, five million children are today walking, who would otherwise have been paralyzed, and more than 1.5 billion childhood deaths have been averted.

Some activities undertaken by the WHO are largely invisible, quietly protecting the health of every person on this planet. By assigning a single international name to drugs, the WHO helps ensure that a prescription filled abroad is the same as what the doctor ordered back home.

Construction Begins In Kernersville, Sanford

Continued from Pg 1

art VA site of care.

“The construction of the Kernersville Health Care Center is yet another example of VA’s commitment to providing the best care for North Carolina Veterans,” said VISN 6 Director Daniel F. Hoffmann. “VA continues to create greater access to our services for all Veterans. This new HCC will give us the ability to provide the best care anywhere to more than 30,000 Veterans in this area.”

When asked about site selection, Hoffmann stated that demographics played a key role in choosing the location of the HCC. “Kernersville is a geographic center for Veterans to the east, west, north and south, and in a very good location in relation to roadways and access,” he said.

Salisbury VAMC Director Kaye Green added that she’s proud of the strides the Salisbury VAMC is making to take care of the needs of local Veterans. “I think this is a huge advancement in caring for Veterans in this area,” she said. “This facility will be more than three times larger than the existing Winston-Salem facility and will offer a full range of services, including day surgeries, a cardiac catheterization lab and dialysis services currently not available at Winston-Salem”

During Fiscal Year 2013, the Salisbury VAMC and its CBOCs cared for more than 94,000 Veterans who reside in the 24 counties surrounding the medical center. VA awarded the contract to Lend Lease (US) Healthcare Development, LLC, out of Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. Lend Lease will build the four-story HCC, which will have 280,000 net usable square feet of space. The Kernersville HCC is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2016.

Two weeks later, VA, state and local officials gathered again, this time in Sanford, N.C. On Feb. 7, officials broke ground for a new 10,000 sq. ft. CBOC which will increase access to VA health care for Veterans in living in Lee, Harnett, and Moore counties.

The new clinic in Sanford will be managed by the Fayetteville VAMC. When open, the Sanford CBOC will join a growing network of VA facilities focused on caring for the growing population of Veterans in eastern North Carolina.

The rise in Veteran population in the area has been steady and is projected to continue upward for years to come. To meet the demand, VA has opened new outpatient clinics in Robeson, Brunswick and Wayne Counties. This is in addition to replacing the existing CBOC



Brad Garner

VA, state and local officials break ground for a new 10,000 sq. ft. CBOC in Sanford, N.C. .

in Wilmington, N.C., with a much larger and more capable HCC which opened last year and replacing the CBOC in Jacksonville with one that is nearly double the size of the existing clinic that should open in 2015. Topping off all this development will be Fayetteville’s new 285,000 square foot HCC which has been under construction since summer 2013 and is expected to be completed

According to Fayetteville VAMC Director Elizabeth Goolsby, the Sanford clinic will initially host two Patient Aligned Care Teams, each consisting of a health care provider, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse and a medical support assistant. Mental health and telehealth services will also be available. As demand increases, the clinic has the capacity to serve up to 7,000 patients.

The Fayetteville VAMC and its CBOC currently serve more than 90,000 Veterans from 19 counties in southeastern North Carolina and two counties in northeastern South Carolina.

Construction Managers Inc., of Fremont, N.C., builders of the VA clinic in Goldsboro which opened in July, was awarded the contract to build the Sanford CBOC which is expected to open in early 2015. The contract covers the construction of the clinic and a five year lease with five, one year, extensions. The total cost of the lease for the 10-year period is approximately \$2.5 million.

Both the Kernersville HCC and Sanford CBOC will be built to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.

VA Begins Issuing New Secure Veteran Health ID Cards

VA has announced the phased roll out of newly designed, more secure Veteran Health Identification Cards. The new cards are distinguished by additional security features and will have a different look and feel.

In addition to being more secure, the card has been transformed into a Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC). Similar to a typical health insurance card, the VHIC displays the Veteran's Member ID, a new unique identifier, as well as a Plan ID, reflecting the Veteran's enrollment in VA health care.

"VA is committed to providing high quality health care while ensuring the personal security of Veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "These new identification cards are an important step forward in protecting our nation's heroes from identity theft and other personal crimes."

The VHIC is personalized to display the emblem of the Veteran's branch of service. It also provides features that make it easier to use, such as the addition of "VA" in Braille to help visually impaired Veterans, and the printing of VA phone numbers and emergency care instructions on the cards.

The card replaces the Veteran Identification Card (VIC), which was introduced in 2004. As part of a phased rollout, the card is now being provided to newly enrolled and other Veterans who have not been issued a VIC. In early April, VA will begin a three month effort to automatically issue the more secure VHIC to current



VIC cardholders. VA recommends Veterans safeguard their VIC as they would a credit card, and cut up or shred the card once it is replaced. While not required to receive VA health care, all enrolled Veterans are encouraged to get a VHIC.

Enrolled Veterans can get more information about the VHIC by visiting their VA medical facility enrollment coordinator or the website www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhic, calling 877-222-VETS (8387) or visiting their local VA health care facility.

Veterans who are not enrolled in the VA health care system can apply for enrollment at any time by visiting www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll, calling 877-222-VETS (8387) or visiting their local VA health care facility.



Wi-fi continued from Pg 4

devices with them for future clinic appointments and hospital stays to take advantage of this new service.

Because of the logistics involved with the installation of the systems, not all areas of each facility are coming on line at the same time.

As an example, at Fayetteville, access now exists in the basement, first and second floors, the Community Living Center and the 3A & 4A Dayrooms.

Still being worked are clinic waiting areas in Bldgs. 45, 46, 47, 48 and 50 as well as the auditorium, high-tech conference room, Prosthetics and Rehabilitation Clinic, Geriatric Park and main hospital front lobby.

Left: While waiting for her husband to complete his appointment, Veteran and caregiver spouse LeeAnne Accetturo takes advantage of the free Wi-Fi now available in most Fayetteville VAMC outpatient clinic waiting areas. "Wow, this is great. Just last month I was saying, 'This place really needs Wi-Fi,'" said a jubilant Accetturo when told about the new service.
Jeffery Melvin

North Carolina Women Veterans Summit, Expo To Be Held

On April 17, the VHA, VBA and the North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs will host the first ever North Carolina Women Veterans Summit and Expo.

This event seeks to connect female Veterans with all federal, state and local organizations which offer or support Veterans' benefits.

The theme of this occasion is to "Empower, Educate and Enrich" the fastest growing group within the Veteran population. Women Veterans will have access to



counselors with expertise in VBA Claims, VA healthcare, eBenefits, GI Bill, education and training benefits, VA home loans, Women's business opportunities and more.

The event is free and will take place from 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the NC National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters in Raleigh.

The venue is a secure facility and pre-registration is encouraged. Registration and more information can be found at www.NCVRAC.org or by phone at 844-NC4-VETS.

From Support To Combat: Women Have Done It All

By Kenita Gordon
VISN 6 public affairs

March is designated as National Women's History Month and VA remains committed to serving the needs of the nation's women Veterans. A 2013 VA report shows currently 10 percent of U.S. Veterans are women and that number is expected to increase.

This year's theme is "Celebrating Women of Character, Courage, and Commitment." Our nation's women Veterans embody the traits outlined in this year's theme and the citizens of this nation owe their freedom, in part, to them.

The role of women in the armed forces has evolved, especially for those who served during the Gulf War and most recent conflicts. In January 2013, the Department of Defense rescinded the Direct Combat Exclusion Rule, opening combat roles to women.

While this may have officially bridged the gap allowing American women into combat, the truth is that women have served in combat as early as 1776. During the revolutionary war, many women served, often disguised as men. Other times they served as spies or in unofficial roles or alongside their husbands out of necessity.

During the attack on Fort Mifflin in 1776, Margaret Corbin handled ammunition for a cannon standing alongside her husband John. After he was fatally wounded, she took his place at the cannon until she was wounded. For her bravery Congress authorized a pension for her in 1779.

Women continued to conceal their identities to fight in battle during the Civil War and in the years after. In



1866, Cathay Williams became the first African-American female to enlist in the U.S. Army. She enlisted posing as a man under the pseudonym William Cathay and served for two years with 38th U.S. Infantry before being discharged.

After the Army and Navy Nurse Corps were established in 1901 and 1908 respectively, women began to serve in official capacities without disguise. According to the DOD, 15 percent of the U.S. military's active duty personnel were women in 2013.

Although not previously assigned to infantry or combat brigades, the prevalence of women in combat reached its peak during the most recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Over the past decade, more than 280,000 women have deployed in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. By 2016, one in five Army positions will be considered combat-related, opening thousands of new combat roles for women.

Black History Month Highlights Civil Rights In America

VA joined the nation in February commemorating Black History Month. This year's theme, Civil Rights in America, highlights the history, evolution and future of the fight for civil rights for people of African descent.

African Americans have fought in every American conflict since the Revolutionary War and are the second largest ethnic group in the armed forces. They have contributed to every aspect of American history and society – from military service to achievements in music, athletics, math, academia and science.

One notable African American Scientist, Dr. Charles Drew, was a surgeon and researcher who organized the United States' first large-scale blood bank. During his 1933-1935 internship Drew worked closely with bacteriology professor John Beattie exploring ways to treat shock with transfusion and other fluid replacement. From there he developed an interest in transfusion medicine that he later pursued in his blood bank research.

In September 1940 Drew was tasked to direct the Blood for Britain project. Great Britain, then under attack by Germany, was in desperate need of blood and plasma to treat military and civilian casualties. Drew established uniform procedures and standards for collecting blood and processing blood plasma at the participating hospitals to send abroad.

When the program ended in January 1941, Drew was appointed assistant director of a pilot program for a national blood banking system, jointly sponsored by the National Research Council and the American Red Cross in charge of blood for use by the U.S. Army and Navy. Among his innovations were mobile blood donation stations, later called "bloodmobiles."

Blood transfusions have been instrumental life-saving procedures for Veterans who receive care in VISN 6 and at VAs across the nation. According to Transfusion Medicine Supervisor Brenda Carlton at Richmond VAMC, someone needs blood every two seconds and one unit of

blood can save up to three lives.

Carlton says the demands of blood banks increase with the increase in medical development and the ag-



Courtesy Photo

Photo of Dr. Charles Drew, courtesy of the U.S. National Library of Medicine.

ing patient population. "Traumas, elective surgeries, organ transplant, bone marrow transplant and oncology patients require a large amount of blood product support" said Carlton.

Black History Month began as Negro History Week in 1915 by educator and historian Dr. Carter G. Woodson of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, later renamed the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH).

Dr. Woodson chose the second week of February for Negro History Week because it marked the birthdays of two people who had greatly impacted Black Americans' lives: Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.

In 1976, during the United States Bicentennial, the expansion to Black History Month was officially recognized by the U.S. government. In his February 10, 1976 speech, President Gerald Ford urged Americans to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."



VA Expands Benefits For Traumatic Brain Injury

Some Veterans with traumatic brain injury (TBI) who are diagnosed with any of five other ailments will have an easier path to receive additional disability pay under a new VA regulation.

The new regulation impacted some Veterans living with TBI who also have Parkinson's disease, certain types of dementia, depression, unprovoked seizures or certain diseases of the hypothalamus and pituitary glands.

"We decide Veterans' disability claims based on the best science available," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "As scientific knowledge advances, VA will expand its programs to ensure Veterans receive the care and benefits they've earned and deserve."

This regulation stemmed from a report of the National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine (IOM) regarding the association between TBI and the five diagnosable illnesses. The IOM report, *Gulf War and Health, Volume 7: Long-Term Consequences of Traumatic Brain Injury*, found "sufficient evidence" to link moderate or severe levels of TBI with the five ailments.

The new regulation, printed in the Federal Register, says that if certain Veterans with service-connected TBI also have one of the five illnesses, then the second illness will also be considered as service connected for the calculation of VA disability compensation.

Eligibility for expanded benefits will depend upon the severity of the TBI and the time between the injury causing the TBI and the onset of the second illness. However, Veterans can still file a claim to establish direct service-connection for these ailments even if they do not meet the time and severity standards in the new regulation.

Veterans who have questions or who wish to file new disability claims are encouraged to use the eBenefits website, and service members who are within 180 days of discharge may also file a pre-discharge claim for TBI online at www.eBenefits.va.gov/ebenefits.

Information about VA and DoD programs for brain injury and related research is available at www.dvbc.org. Information about VA's programs for Gulf War Veterans is available at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/hazardous_exposures.asp.

VA Offers New Dental Insurance Program

VA has implemented a comprehensive national VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP) to give enrolled Veterans and CHAMPVA beneficiaries the opportunity to purchase dental insurance through Delta Dental and MetLife at a reduced cost.

Participation is voluntary and purchasing a dental plan does not affect Veterans' eligibility for VA dental services and treatment.

Covered services include diagnostic, preventative, surgical, emergency and endodontic/restorative treatment. Delta Dental and MetLife are offering multiple

plans. Each participant pays the fixed monthly premiums for coverage and any copayments required, depending on the type of plan selected.

Dependents of Veterans, except those eligible under CHAMPVA, are not authorized to participate in VADIP. Those individuals may be eligible for separate dental insurance coverage offered by these carriers.

For more information about VADIP, please visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vadip/ and click on the fact sheet link or call Delta Dental at 855-370-3303 or MetLife at 888-310-1681.

VA Mail-Order Pharmacy Scores High In J.D. Power Study

For the fourth consecutive year, the VA's Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy received the highest customer satisfaction score among the nation's public and private mail-order pharmacies, according to a 2013 independent study conducted by J.D. Power.

Veterans were asked to rate VA on cost competitiveness, delivery, ordering process and customer service experience.

Out of 1,000 possible points, VA scored 871. This was the highest score among participating mail-order pharmacies.

The score matched the same industry-high score received by the Department in 2012. VA also led the

industry nationwide in 2010 and 2011. "The fact that we are rated higher than our private sector counterparts is due in part to our unique partnership with our patients and medical centers," said Dr. Robert A. Petzel, VA's Under Secretary for Health. "In addition to the convenience of mail-order service, Veterans also have a pharmacist available to meet with them face to face."

VA participates in this annual survey as a way to compare itself against industry leaders and to ensure VA health care meets the highest standards.

Veterans who wish to learn about the mail-order pharmacy and other health benefits can find information at www.va.gov/healthbenefits/.

VA's National Cemeteries Continue Leading Nation in Satisfaction

For the fifth consecutive time, the Department of Veterans Affairs' National Cemetery Administration (NCA) has bested the nation's top corporations and other federal agencies in a prestigious, independent survey of customer satisfaction conducted by the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI).

"Once again, this survey shows that employees at VA's 131 national cemeteries are committed to providing world-class customer service for our Nation's Veterans and their families," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "It is an honor to care for our Nation's heroes in perpetuity, and we use the highest of standards of compassion and professionalism to ensure we commemorate their service to our nation."

For 2013, NCA achieved a customer satisfaction index of 96 out of 100, the highest ACSI score in either the private or public sector in the history of the ACSI. The score is nearly 28 points above the 68 point average for federal government agencies. NCA participates in the ACSI every three years, previously in 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010. This is the fifth time NCA partici-

pated and the fifth consecutive time NCA received the top rating of participating organizations.

The ACSI survey polled the next-of-kin or other people who had arranged for the interment of a loved one in a VA national cemetery six months to one year prior to the survey commencement.

The ACSI is the only national, cross-industry measure of satisfaction with the quality of goods and services available in the United States. Beginning in 1999, the federal government selected ACSI to measure citizen satisfaction. Citing the NCA's record-setting ACSI results, the independent Federal Consulting Group noted the satisfaction scores as the "highest to date for any organization in the public or private sector." The driving factors for continued customer satisfaction include cemetery service and customer service.

For more information please visit www.cem.va.gov or call VA regional offices toll-free at 800-827-1000. To make burial arrangements at the time of need at any VA national cemetery, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117.

VA Announces First Industry Innovation Competition For 2014

VA has announced the first of multiple Industry Innovation Competitions in 2014, which identify, test, and evaluate promising innovations that enhance the accessibility and quality of mental health care and services delivered to Veterans.

The innovations from this competition will add to VA's already extensive mental health programs. The competition is part of the VA Center for Innovation (VACI), a department-wide program that seeks the most promising innovations from employees, the private sector, non-profits, and academia to increase Veterans' access to VA services, improve the quality of services delivered, enhance the performance of VA operations,

and reduce or control the cost of delivering those services.

This Industry Innovation Competition seeks creative solutions in the areas of:

- Upstream Suicide Intervention.
- Improving Veterans Receptivity to Mental Health Care to Promote Treatment, Engagement, and Participation.
- Innovative Methods of Incentivizing Behavior to Improve Mental Wellness.

These topics and processes are detailed in the Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) and can be found at www.fbo.gov and at www.innovation.va.gov/.

VA Offers New Tools To Inform Post-9/11 GI Bill Beneficiaries

VA's new GI Bill® Comparison Tool, allows Veterans to find information online about Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits and the schools and training programs available to education beneficiaries.

Before this tool launched, estimating how much beneficiaries may receive under the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit was challenging. Many beneficiaries provided this feedback to our GI Bill Facebook page. The new comparison tool makes it easy to estimate Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits with just one click.

In addition, Veterans can find and compare information on more than 10,000 approved education and training programs, including estimated tuition and fee

amounts and projected housing allowance.

Also available are each school's graduation rate, student loan default rate and Yellow Ribbon participation. Together, the GI Bill benefit estimator and school comparison information enable students to compare education options and make the best decision for their future.



VISN 6 Sites Of Care & VA Vet Centers

MEDICAL CENTERS

Asheville VAMC
1100 Tunnel Road
Asheville, NC 28805
828-298-7911, 800-932-6408
www.asheville.va.gov/

Beckley VAMC
200 Veterans Avenue
Beckley, WV 25801
304-255-2121, 877-902-5142
www.beckley.va.gov/

Durham VAMC
508 Fulton St.
Durham, NC 27705
919-286-0411, 888-878-6890
www.durham.va.gov/

Fayetteville VAMC
2300 Ramsey St.
Fayetteville, NC 28301
910-488-2120, 800-771-6106
www.fayettevillenc.va.gov

Hampton VAMC
100 Emancipation Dr.
Hampton, VA 23667
757-722-9961, 866-544-9961
www.hampton.va.gov/

Richmond VAMC
1201 Broad Rock Blvd.
Richmond, VA 23249
804-675-5000, 800-784-8381
www.richmond.va.gov/

Salem VAMC
1970 Roanoke Blvd.
Salem, VA 24153
540-982-2463, 888-982-2463
www.salem.va.gov/

Salisbury VAMC
1601 Brenner Ave.
Salisbury, NC 28144
704-638-9000, 800-469-8262
www.salisbury.va.gov/

OUTPATIENT CLINICS

Albemarle CBOC
1845 W City Drive
Elizabeth City, NC 27909
252-331-2191

Brunswick Outreach Clinic
20 Medical Campus Drive
Supply, NC 28462
910-754-6141

Charlotte CBOC
8601 University East Drive
Charlotte, NC 28213
704-597-3500

Charlottesville CBOC
650 Peter Jefferson Pkwy
Charlottesville, VA 22911
434-293-3890

Danville CBOC
705 Piney Forest Rd.
Danville, VA 24540
434-710-4210

Emporia CBOC
1746 East Atlantic Street
Emporia, VA 23847
434-348-1500

Franklin CBOC
647 Wayah St.
Franklin, NC 28734-3390
828-369-1781

Fredricksburg CBOC
130 Executive Center Pkwy
Fredericksburg, VA 22401
540-370-4468

Goldsboro CBOC
2610 Hospital Road
Goldsboro, NC 27909
919-731-9766

Greenbrier County CBOC
804 Industrial Park Rd.
Maxwelton, WV 24957
304-497-3900

Greenville HCC
401 Moye Blvd.
Greenville, NC 27834
252-830-2149

Hamlet CBOC
100 Jefferson Street
Hamlet, NC 28345
910-582-3536

Hickory CBOC
2440 Century Place, SE
Hickory, NC 28602
828-431-5600

Hillandale Rd. Annex
1824 Hillandale Road
Durham, North Carolina 27705
919-383-6107

Jacksonville CBOC
241 Freedom Way
Midway Park, NC 28544
910-353-6406

Lynchburg CBOC
1600 Lakeside Drive
Lynchburg, VA 24501
434-316-5000

Morehead City CBOC
5420 U.S. 70
Morehead City, NC 28557
252-240-2349

Raleigh CBOC
3305 Sungate Blvd.
Raleigh, NC 27610
919-212-0129

Raleigh II Annex
3040 Hammond Business Place
Raleigh, NC 27603
919-899-6259

Robeson County CBOC
139 Three Hunts Drive
Pembroke, NC 28372
910-521-8452

Rutherford County CBOC
374 Charlotte Rd.
Rutherfordton, NC 28139
828-288-2780

Staunton CBOC
102 Business Way
Staunton, VA 24401
540-886-5777

Tazewell CBOC
123 Ben Bolt Ave.
Tazewell, VA 24651
276-988-2526

Village Green Annex
1991 Fordham Drive
Fayetteville, NC 28304
910-488-2120 ext. 4020,

Virginia Beach CBOC
244 Clearfield Avenue
Virginia Beach, VA
757-722-9961, ext. 1900

Wilmington HCC
1705 Gardner Rd.
Wilmington, NC 28405
910-343-5300

Winston-Salem CBOC
190 Kimel Park Drive
Winston-Salem, NC 27103
336-768-3296

Winston-Salem Annex
2101 Peters Creek Parkway
Winston-Salem, NC 27127
336-761-5300

Wytheville CBOC
165 Peppers Ferry Rd.
Wytheville, VA 24382-2363
276-223-5400

DIALYSIS CENTERS

VA Dialysis and Blind Rehabilitation Clinics at Brier Creek
8081 Arco Corporate Drive
Raleigh, NC 27617
919-286-5220

VA Dialysis Clinic Fayetteville
2301 Robeson Street, Ste. 101
Fayetteville, NC 28305
910-483-9727

VET CENTERS

Beckley Vet Center
1000 Johnstown Road
Beckley, WV 25801
304-252-8220

Charlotte Vet Center
2114 Ben Craig Dr.
Charlotte, NC 28262
704-549-8025

Fayetteville Vet Center
4140 Ramsey St.
Fayetteville, NC 28311
910-488-6252

Greensboro Vet Center
2009 S. Elm-Eugene St.
Greensboro, NC 27406
336-333-5366

Greenville Vet Center
1021 W.H. Smith Blvd.
Greenville, NC 27834
252-355-7920

Jacksonville, N.C. Vet Center
110-A Branchwood Drive
Jacksonville, NC 28546
910-577-1100

Norfolk Vet Center
1711 Church Street
Norfolk, VA 23504
757-623-7584

Princeton Vet Center
905 Mercer Street
Princeton, WV 24740
304-425-5653

Raleigh Vet Center
1649 Old Louisburg Rd.
Raleigh, NC 27604
919-856-4616

Roanoke Vet Center
350 Albemarle Ave., SW
Roanoke, VA 24016
540-342-9726

Virginia Beach Vet Center
324 Southport Circle, Suite 102
Virginia Beach, VA, 23452
757-248-3665