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Voices of VISN 6

Official news from around *your* VISN

VA MID-ATLANTIC HEALTH CARE NETWORK • VISN SIX

Vol. 5, No. 7 April 30, 2015

Charles George VAMC Earns First 5-Star Quality Rating

By Sharonda Pearson
Asheville VAMC
public affairs

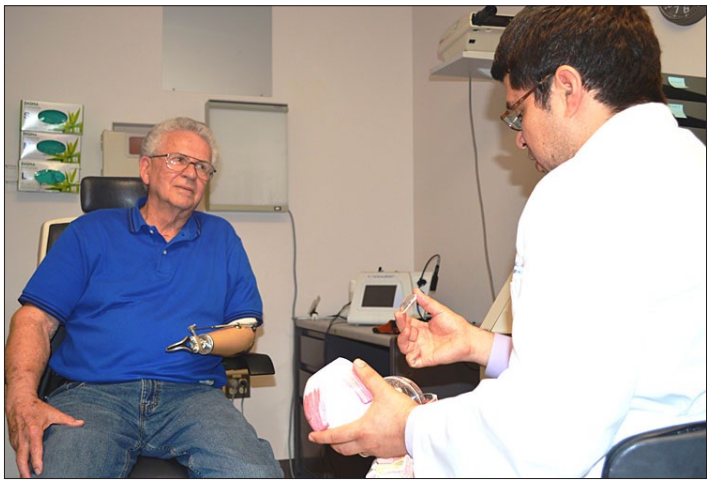
From the moment Thomas Davis walked through the doors of the Charles George VAMC in early 2011, he knew there was something special about the facility.

"I was immediately impressed with the professionalism, knowledge, and general attitude of everyone I came in contact with," said Davis, a retired Army colonel with more than 30 years of service, including time with the U.S. Special Operations Command.

From a handwritten note explaining his lab results, to the follow up call from his Audiology physician to ensure that his TV listening device was working correctly, Davis says the medical center earned its recent 5-Star rating by providing exceptional care to America's heroes.

"Every experience I have—from general administration, Primary Care 1, the Sleep Clinic,

Continued on Pg 4



Sharonda Pearson

Army Veteran Leo Arnold talks with Dr. Ramiro Maldonado about cataract surgery. Arnold lost his left arm and part of his left leg while serving in the National Guard in 1960.

VA Expands Choice Program Eligibility

VA announced on April 24, that it will determine eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program based on the distance between a Veteran's place of residence and the nearest VA medical facility using driving distance rather than straight-line distance.

This change has been published in the Federal Register and is effective immediately.

"VA is pleased to announce the distance calculation change from straight-line to driving distance for the Veterans Choice Program," said Secretary Robert McDonald. "This update to the program will allow more Veterans to access care when and where they want it. We look forward to continued dialogue with Veterans and our partners to help us ensure continued improvements for Veterans' to access care."

The change from straight-line to driving distance roughly doubles the number of eligible Veterans. Letters are being sent to the newly eligible Veterans to let them know they are now eligible for the Veterans Choice Program under this expansion.

If a Veteran does not remember receiving a Veterans Choice Card or has other questions about the Choice Program, they can call 866-606-8198.

Effective immediately, VA is also changing the mileage calculation for beneficiary travel. The change will ensure consistency in VA's mileage calculations across the two programs. The beneficiary travel calculation will now be made using the fastest route instead of the shortest route.

See page 11 of this publication for frequently asked questions about the Choice Program and a list of VISN 6 program coordinators.

For more details about the department's progress and related information, see www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/factsheets_and_details.asp.

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From The Director

On Sunday, America celebrates Mother's Day. I offer a salute on behalf of the entire VISN to all the mothers who are Veterans we care for, and all the mothers working throughout the VISN who provide that care.

Our Nation's growing reliance on women serving in uniform, "In the air, on land, and sea;" has created a growing population of women Veterans, and in-turn, a greater need for specialized health care related to their needs. I am proud of the gender specific programs we have developed, and the expansion of services we are able to provide to the more than 50,000 women enrolled throughout the VISN.

We want to be a leader in providing comprehensive health care for women Veterans and we are working to ensure all eligible women Veterans entrusting their care to us can be confident in receiving the highest quality preventive and clinical care in an environment that provides for privacy, security, dignity, and sensitivity.

I also want to take a moment to pay tribute to all those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in protecting our way of life.

On Monday, May 25, America will commemorate Memorial Day. It's important to remember that our freedoms, our very way of life, comes from the dedicated service and sacrifice of so many.

President John F. Kennedy said, "The cost of freedom is always high, but Americans have always paid it…."

Part of that cost of freedom is evidenced by the headstones in cemeteries around this nation and in distant lands.

Part of the cost of freedom is evidenced by the more than eight million Veterans who rely upon VA for their health care.

Across this Nation, men and women who served turn to us to help them with their health and wellness. Throughout VISN 6, we are using every means available to help as many Veterans as possible. To ensure we do so, we continue to seek ideas, suggestions, and recommendations from our staff and patient population.

Since last summer, I have traveled to all the medical centers. I've met with a wide variety of staff and Veterans, and I've listened to their comments. After each visit, I review what I've heard with medical center leadership and together, we work to improve service wherever possible.

This month, I have focused my travels on our Community Based Outpatient Clinics. Over the last 30 days, I have visited the clinics in Fredericksburg, Charlottesville, Staunton and Wytheville, Virginia, and took part in a Veterans Advisory Council meeting hosted by the Hampton VA Medical Center.

While visiting the clinics, it gave me great pleasure to recognize the nurses in attendance for Nursing Week. Our mission, and health care in general, would be impossible without the contributions of the nurses. My hat's off to the entire Nurse corps for the tremendous work you do.

While visiting the clinics and engaging with staff and Veterans, many people had questions about the Choice Program, which is why we've included the story on Page 1 and devoted Page 11 to Frequently Asked Questions about the program. Many people also commented on the need for Health Net to expand the numbers and types of providers in their network. While we do not control who they contract with, we do pass this information to them as we learn about areas that need attention.

Finally, I'd also like to share that we continue working with state and local agencies in our efforts to create opportunities where agencies can work together to create access through collaborative means.

I look forward to engaging with more staff and Veterans during my visits to the rest of the clinics in the next few months. I am fully committed to delivering high-quality health care to every eligible Veteran, and the information I'm learning through these engagements will have direct impact on our ability to adjust programs and priorities in order to do so.

Sincerely,

Dan Hoffmann

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VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network VISN 6

Voices of VISN 6 is published monthly by VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network.

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

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VA HEALTH CARE | Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

Fayetteville Surgery Chief Earns Ophthalmology Honor

By Jeff Melvin
Fayetteville VAMC public affairs

Dr. Craig Fowler was presented the 2014 R. Townley Paton Award during EBAA's Fall Educational Symposium in Chicago. This award is the EBAA's highest honor to a corneal physician worldwide and is presented annually to an ophthalmologist who exemplifies the precepts of R. Townley Paton, MD, the founder of the world's first eye bank and the first U.S. surgeon to successfully perform a corneal transplant.

Dr. Fowler, who also doubles as chief of ophthalmology, joined the medical center's staff in July 2013 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Medicine where he served as tenured associate professor in the Ophthalmology Department.

He said it was "an exceedingly humbling honor" for a corneal surgeon to get the award named after the physician who "contributed so much to the field of corneal transplantation, ophthalmology, and the restoration of vision worldwide."

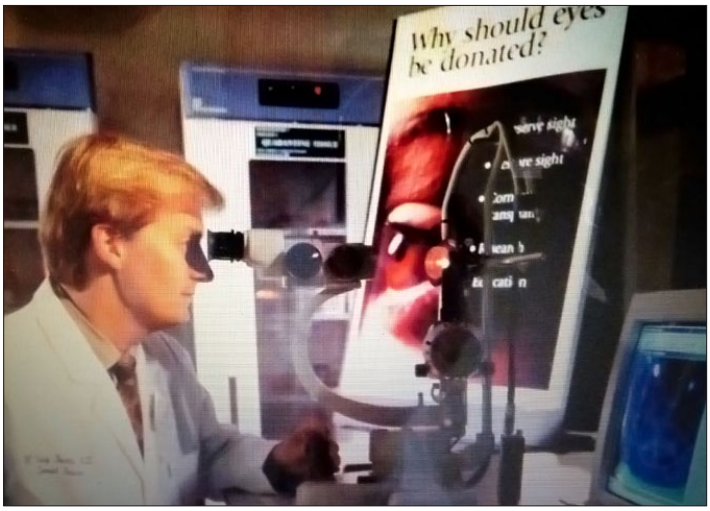
In addition to his dedicated service at the Fayetteville VAMC and UNC, Dr. Fowler has served as the medical director of Miracles in Sight (formerly the North Carolina Eye Bank) for more than 20 years, specializing in corneal transplantation, cataract surgery and refractive and laser vision correction. He has been honored with "Best Doctor in America" Awards each year from 2001 through 2014.

Dr. Craig Fowler

An active EBAA member for over two decades, Dr. Fowler is a past long-time member of the EBAA Technician Education Seminar faculty and served as the faculty chair for years. He currently serves on the Medical Advisory Board for the EBAA and has authored numerous papers and articles in ophthalmic publications such as Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science, Ophthalmology, and the American Academy of Ophthalmology's Basic Clinical Science Course core curriculum in Cornea and External Disease and Refractive surgery.

A number of disastrous outcomes occur with poor vision so "when we restore vision, it's a huge blessing in the life of the patient," Dr. Fowler said.

"Vision is arguably the most important of the senses," he continued. "There is more morbidity (ill health) from decreased vision than there is after a heart attack. If someone can't see, they will fall, have hip fractures, automobile wrecks, etc. They have all kinds of major problems. What we're trying to do is give the gift of sight and that's the bottom line."



Courtesy Photo

Dr. Craig Fowler, Fayetteville VAMC's Chief of Ophthalmology, served as the medical director of Miracles in Sight for more than 20 years, specializing in corneal transplantation, cataract surgery and laser vision correction.

According to Fowler, in 1925, at the Lions National Convention, American educator Helen Keller charged the Lions to be "Knights for the Blind." Keller overcame the adversity of being blind and deaf to become one of the 20th century's leading humanitarians, as well as co-founder of the ACLU.

He challenged the fall symposium attendees, "You are the world's best and brightest in the field of corneal transplantation. 'What are you going to do about solving world corneal blindness?' We have to be "Knights for the blind."

About EBAA: The Eye Bank Association of America (EBAA), established in 1961, is the oldest transplant association in the nation and champions the restoration of sight through corneal transplantation. Over 80 member eye banks operate in the United States, Canada and Asia.

These eye banks made possible nearly 73,000 sight-restoring corneal transplants in 2013 and the opportunity to perform more transplants is significant because virtually everyone is a universal donor. The function of corneal tissue is not dependent on blood type, age, strength of eyesight or the color of the eye. To learn more, visit www.restoresight.org.

Durham VAMC Cardiac Catheterization Lab Spotlighted

By Megan Warren Moore
Durham VAMC public affairs

The Durham VAMC Cardiac Catheterization Lab was featured in the March issue of the Cath Lab Digest. The article highlighted the procedures performed in the lab, the equipment used, and the processes currently in place at the medical center. One of the many highlights of the article was our preprocedure assessment process. This process is unique in the fact the lab is able to reduce the number of unnecessary procedures as well as expedite the process on the day of the procedure. The full article is available at www.cathlabdigest.com/article/Spotlight-Durham-VA-Medical-Center.

Linnie Skidmore

Charles George continued from Pg 1

and Travel Pay—leaves me feeling confident in the technical and systemic competency of everyone at the Asheville VA. I can't tell you what a great, comfortable feeling it is to know that this kind of care is available to me through the Asheville VA."

The Charles George VAMC recently earned a 5-Star Quality rating, the highest possible rating according to VA's Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning Value (SAIL) model.

The medical center also ranked number one in the nation among all VA medical centers for patient satisfaction, which is one of 25 measures considered in the quality ratings.

"I am very proud of our staff and their efforts to ensure that Veterans' experiences at Charles George VAMC are as positive and high quality as their care," said Cynthia Breyfogle, the medical center director. "The rating is indicative of their commitment to providing quality health care to our patients."

SAIL, which is similar to the Truven system used by the private sector, is a system for summarizing hospital system performance within VHA.

The comprehensive tool assesses areas such as patient safety and access to care, and is used to spotlight the successful strategies of VA's top performers in order to promote high quality, safety, and value-based health care across all of its medical centers.

The newly earned rating puts Charles George VAMC in the top 10 percent of all VA medical centers for quality of care and efficiency.

"Earning a Five-Star Quality rating is a major accomplishment," Breyfogle said. "Now we must maintain the standard by continuously improving and never being satisfied with the status quo."

The Charles George VAMC improved from a 3-Star to a 4-Star SAIL rating in late 2014 and earned a 5-Star rating according to the latest SAIL data released this month. Breyfogle attributes the improvement to the quality and hard work of the entire Charles George VAMC staff.

"All of the VISN 6 facilities have worked hard to increase access, quality, and patient satisfaction. Asheville has demonstrated that they have been able to sustain their leading efforts over time on all fronts. Their level of consistency of effort is the hallmark our other facilities will be shooting for as we move into the future," said VISN 6 Network Director Daniel Hoffmann.

Construction Updates

Construction on the Fayetteville, Kernersville and Charlotte Health Care Centers, and the Jacksonville CBOC continues to progress on schedule. Designed to meet the needs of a growing population of VA health care users, these facilities will add nearly 1 million square feet of patient care space. All four facilities are scheduled to be open within the next 18 months.

Courtesy Photos

Linnie Skidmore

More than 200 people took part in Durham VAMC's first BULL CITY RUN, WALK and ROLL 5K on May 2. Audrey May, USAF retired, comes through the finish line on her Handcycle. May is an Above the Knee Amputee and was referred to Durham's Outpatient Recreation Therapy program in 2014 wanting to become more physically active and meet new people. Since then, she has been active in adaptive sports having participated in VA's Valor Games, Winter Sports Clinic, Wintergreen Adaptive Ski Trip 2015, U.S. Paralympic Clinics and a Handcycle marathon.

The event was sponsored by the medical center in partnership with American Legion Auxiliary Unit 175. Proceeds from the event will benefit the 2015 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival to be held in Durham, Oct. 12-19. For more information on the Creative Arts Festival, visit www.va.gov/opa/speceven/caf/index.asp.

Teleretinal Screening Helps Reduce Risk Of Vision Loss

Robert W. Morris, OD, FAAO
Chief, Teleretinal Imaging Section, Optometry Service, Salisbury VAMC

Diabetic retinopathy is the leading cause of blindness in working age Americans, with 12,000 to 24,000 new cases yearly.

Poor blood sugar control damages the small blood vessels in the lining of the eye (retina) which can result in blood leaking and causing the retina to swell. Left unattended, this can cause permanent damage and may lead to loss of vision and blindness.

While regular screening and control of diabetes can help prevent major vision loss, VA recommends that all Veterans with diabetes be regularly evaluated with a teleretinal imaging or a dilated eye exam.

Teleretinal screening can help reduce the risk of vision loss or blindness for Veterans by identifying eye disease when time, distance, or eye clinic availability separates them from an eye care specialist.

Teleretinal imaging is simple, painless, and the largest store and forward telehealth program in VISN 6, with nearly 100,000 Veterans screened for diabetic retinopathy to date.

Dr. Robert W. Morris

During the exam, a technician captures images of the eye and forwards them to specially trained and certified Doctors of Optometry who review the images and make a recommendation for follow up eye care.

The critical factors that go into the clinical recommendation include the severity of eye disease found on the images, the level of blood sugar control and the timing since the last dilated eye exam.

If vision threatening eye disease is discovered, the recommendation for an urgent, dilated eye exam is made.

Likewise, if the blood sugar is well controlled, the

Continued on Pg 7

VISN 6 Telehealth Program Flourishes, Expands Access

By Steve Wilkins
VISN 6 public affairs

VA has been America's vanguard of Telehealth. Within VA and in the private sector, telehealth services, including the diagnosis, prescription and treatment of health issues are being heralded as a partial answer to a growing demand for care paired with a limited physician supply. The availability of telehealth services increases Veterans' access to health care while also making it easier for them to receive the care they need.

VISN 6 began using telehealth as a means of delivering health care in 2006. From meager beginnings in Care Coordination Home Telehealth (CCHT), VA has supported Store and Forward (SFT), and Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT), both methods delivering a wide variety of telehealth and telemedicine support to Veterans everywhere.

While Telehealth is not the answer to all medical issues, VISN 6 is employing its use for a variety of treatments. A 2011 Voices of VISN 6 series chronicled the development of Telehealth Services in the VISN, detailing the growth and expansion of services over the preceding five years. At that time, CCHT, SFT and CVT offered a growing number of Veterans convenience and expanded access for audiology, diabetic retinopathy, dermatology, PTSD, schizophrenia, depression, substance abuse, mental health, home health monitoring, diabetes and chronic disease management.

Since then, telehealth services have continued to grow in those areas, supported by every facility in the VISN. Currently, 227 VISN staff are dedicated to the provision of telehealth services, which include 72 clinical specialties in CVT alone. Among the newest offerings are Tele-EEG and Tele-Spirometry.

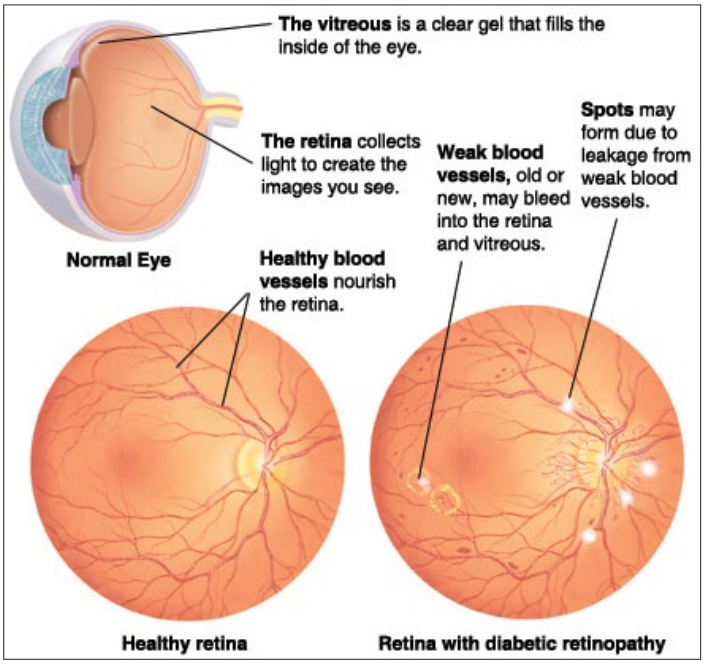
Last year, total VISN 6 telehealth encounters amounted to more than 114,000, up 158 percent from 2010 and a 12 percent increase from 2013. The growth is continuing this year, and is expected to jump considerably with the addition of Home Clinical Video Telehealth, which will allow Veterans to interact with their providers via video monitors in real time.

As with any new change or adoption of technology, individual buy-in began slowly, but has gained momentum over the years. The changes in the VISN since 2011 have been remarkable. More than $14 million has been spent to upgrade equipment, hire and train a staff that has provided services at a pace that will serve close to

Continued on Pg 7

Luke Thompson

Teresa Stiles, Master Preceptor in Teleretinal Imaging, performs a teleretinal screening on Michael Masters' eyes.



Teleretinal continued from Pg 6

Veteran had a recent dilated eye exam and the retinal images are normal, the recommendation for future eye care will be made to ensure regular eye care is completed which helps coordinate the right care at the right place at the right time.

Teleretinal Imaging is offered at all the medical centers and nearly all VISN 6 CBOCs, and is an open access clinic program offering same day appointments with the exam typically taking less than 30 minutes. Most people can be imaged without the need for dilating eye drops.

The target candidates for teleretinal imaging are Veterans with diabetes who do not have diabetic retinopathy, and have no previous laser treatment for retinopathy or any new eye or vision problems.

An eye evaluation for a Veteran with diabetes should be done every 1 or 2 years. It is important to recognize that teleretinal does not replace a dilated eye exam.

Early detection and treatment can help save vision and reduce the risk of blindness. Veterans with diabetes are encouraged to speak to their Primary Care Provider to determine if teleretinal imaging is appropriate for them.

Telehealth continued from Pg 6

128,000 Veteran encounters this year.

According to comments from Dr. Katherine Gianola, former Health Informatics and Telehealth Chief at Richmond VAMC, "Mental health patients of¬ten need frequent interactions. Telehealth gives us the ability to treat patients without them needing to find transportation or sit in waiting rooms." Telemental health uses televisions and phone lines to connect Veterans with their psychological care providers as they work to heal emotional wounds. Also, as patients are typically more at ease and feel better about sharing their concerns over video-teleconferencing, this program has been great for establishing relationships, she added.

Richmond VAMC also serves as the lead facility for nationwide tele-polytrauma services, enabling polytrauma treatment and follow-up services to Veterans who are often challenged by having to travel.

Advocates say telehealth can produce better health results than occasional checkups and repeated hospital stays, and saves money while doing so. According to VA, telehealth programs have reduced hospital admissions, clinic and emergency room visits resulting in an improved quality of life for many Veterans.

"The entire telehealth program offers numerous possibilities to our Veterans who would otherwise be limited in their access to quality health care. Telehealth brings care to the Veteran and because of the education provided, patients learn better self-care management techniques," according to VISN Telehealth Services Program Manager Mary Foster.

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Bill Pack Named PVA National Service Officer Of The Year

By Lani Poblete
PVA Communications

William "Bill" Pack, a Senior National Service Officer for Paralyzed Veterans of America was recently honored with the Victor S. McCoy Award for Excellence. The Victor S. McCoy Award is named after Paralyzed Veterans' first Associate Executive Director of the veterans benefits department and a legendary leader who helped transform the department into what it is today. Pack, along with others were recognized for their dedication to Veterans during the 2015 Continuing Education Program for national service officers held in April 20-22 in Dallas, Texas.

Pack, who is based out of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, has worked for Paralyzed Veterans for 11 years, and has received numerous letters from clients expressing their appreciation for his services.

"Bill is dedicated, passionate, hardworking and well respected by his supervisors and colleagues," said Earnest Hill, who manages the East-Central region for Veterans benefits, and nominated Pack for the award. "He has profoundly improved the lives of thousands of our members, clients and their families over his career."

PVA is the only congressionally chartered Veterans service organization dedicated solely for the benefit and representation of Veterans with spinal cord injury or disease.

For nearly 70 years, PVA has ensured that Veterans have received the benefits earned through their service to our nation; monitored their care in VA spinal cord injury units; and funded research and education in the search for a cure and improved care for individuals with paralysis.

As a partner for life, PVA also develops training and career services, works to ensure accessibility in public buildings and spaces, provides health and rehabilitation opportunities through sports and recreation and advocates for Veterans and all people with disabilities.

Courtesy Photo
William (Bill) Pack displays the Victor S. McCoy Award for Excellence during PVA's national training meeting in Dallas.

With more than 70 offices and 34 chapters, Paralyzed Veterans serves Veterans, their families and their caregivers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Over the past year Paralyzed Veterans of America provided benefits, health advocacy, employment and rehabilitation assistance to more than 60,000 veterans and their families nationwide. PVA also secured more than $290 million in new benefit awards from VA for Veterans last year.

To learn more about PVA's National Service Officers and their service to Veterans, visit www.pva.org.

VA Extends Program For Veterans With Traumatic Brain Injury

VA has awarded 20 contracts to facilities located in 27 states for the Assisted Living Pilot Program for Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury (AL-TBI). Originally slated to end in 2014, the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 ("VACAA") extended this program through October 2017.

"We are pleased to extend this valuable program and provide specialized assisted living services to eligible Veterans with traumatic brain injury that will enhance their rehabilitation, quality of life and community integration," said Dr. Carolyn Clancy, VA's Interim Under Secretary for Health, "TBI is one of the prevalent wounds of the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and VA remains committed to taking care of those Veterans suffering from TBI."

Under the AL-TBI program, Veterans meeting the eligibility criteria are placed in private sector TBI residential care facilities specializing in neurobehavioral rehabilitation. The program offers team-based care and assistance in areas such as speech, memory and mobility. Approximately 202 Veterans participated in the AL-TBI Pilot Program in 47 facilities located in 22 states. Currently, 101 Veterans participate in the pilot as VA continues to accept new eligible patients into the program.

The contracts went into effect on April 1. For more information about the TBI program, visit www.polytrauma.va.gov.

Memorial Day Honors Sacrifice Of Those Gone Too Soon

The Memorial Day tradition of paying tribute to those lost under the colors of our great Nation, who died in securing the peace and freedom we enjoy each and every day, dates back to the years following our Civil War. And, the heritage of unselfish sacrifice recognized in this tradition goes back even further.

In a sense, it can be traced to the sacrifices made by early colonists who fought to protect their homes and families. But the most specific date on which we might pinpoint this birthright belongs to a late spring day in April at the edge of a small New England town. There, Captain John Parker and a ragged group of colonial Americans stood their ground against a column of British soldiers.

When the smoke cleared at Lexington Green, eight American "Minutemen" lay dead—the first blood spilled in defense of the principles of freedom upon which our country was founded.

Today, two hundred and forty years later, a heritage of selfless sacrifice extends unbroken through generations of Americans, manifested most clearly in the men and women who have answered the call to arms—a call that has often led to loneliness, danger, injury and, for some, their "last full measure of devotion."

Today, as we salute those who paid this ultimate price, we see our history in their ranks—from those Minutemen in their homespun clothing, to the dedicated Servicemembers who wear our Nation's uniforms in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In these latest conflicts, thousands of names have been added to our Nation's roster of honored dead while serving in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Some 40 million Americans have served in wartime, and more than a million of them have given their lives for the cause of freedom.

From the opening rounds of the American Revolution, the incomprehensible devastation of our Civil War, through World War I, World War II, and Korea, through Vietnam and Desert Storm, to those who have fought—and fight still today, Americans of every generation have been called upon to defend the frontiers of freedom. And too many did not return to their families.

This Memorial Day, as we honor our war dead, we have so many reasons to honor, remember, and respect those who sacrificed to protect our way of life.

This is a day to thank every American generation who served, to salute them for the enduring gifts they gave to us.

As we reflect on what might have been for those who died in service to America, we can conclude that hope for a better country and a better world was one of the goals for which they sacrificed.

In the words of Abraham Lincoln, "It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated to the unfinished work which they have thus far so nobly advanced . . ." and "to bind up the Nation's wounds" by providing the best possible care for those "who shall have borne the battle" and their families.

That is what we remind ourselves of on this Memorial Day, 2015. And that is the message that we should all carry this day, and every day, in the coming year.

Hero
Ally
Purposeful
Productive
Yeomanly

Mentor
Original
Teacher
Helpful
Enthusiastic
Resilient
Supporter

Devoted
Advocate
Young & Old

Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses Committee Advises On Research

The Research Advisory Committee (RAC) on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses advises VA on research related to the health consequences of military service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the Gulf War (Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm).

Many Gulf War Veterans have reported a multitude of symptoms that began during or shortly after the 1990-1991 war and continue to plague them. These symptoms include fatigue, musculoskeletal pain, sleep disturbance, cognitive dysfunction, and gastrointestinal distress. The range of chronic symptoms and health problems are not explained by standard medical diagnoses. The condition is not well-defined and the symptom set varies from one patient to the next.

VA's War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC) program is a terrific resource for post-deployment Veterans with complex health conditions that have no known cause, medical histories that include many tests and treatments with little improvement in their symptoms, or possible deployment-related environmental exposures.

Eligible Veterans can be referred by their primary care providers for a comprehensive clinical evaluation conducted at the center closest to where they live. The three centers are located in Palo Alto, Calif., Washington, D.C., and East Orange, N.J.

More information on the WRIISC program is available at www.warrelatedillness.va.gov.

VA Research Commemorates 90 Years Of Health Care Innovation

VA will highlight 90 years of improving the lives of Veterans and other Americans through medical and prosthetics research when it celebrates National VA Research Week May 18–22, at host medical facilities across the United States and its territories.

"VA Research and Development plays a pivotal role in improving the health of Veterans," said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. "In addition, the advances in health care developed by VA have benefited millions of other Americans and patients worldwide."

As part of the nation's largest integrated health care system, VA research has unique opportunities to address some of the most critical issues in health care today. During fiscal year 2015, nearly 3,400 VA researchers will work on more than 2,200 projects. In addition to VA funding, VA researchers compete for funding from the National Institutes of Health, nonprofit associations and private pharmaceutical and biotechnology firms.

VA medical centers across the nation will mark VA Research Week with special events such as tours of their research facilities, lectures, poster displays and luncheons to honor the Veterans who voluntarily participate in VA studies.

The week-long activities will highlight current research, much of it focusing on Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans, and using new technology in fields such as brain imaging, DNA sequencing and cell therapy.

Another highlight of Research Week will center on VA's Million Veteran Program, which aims to create one of the world's largest databases of health and genetic information. To date, the program has enrolled some 350,000 Veterans.

Also in the spotlight will be past accomplishments, such as the work of Nobel Prize recipient Dr. Andrew Schally, who received the award in 1977 for discoveries relating to hormones. Today, nearly four decades later, Dr. Schally is still an active VA researcher, studying cancer, diabetes and heart disease at the Miami VA Medical Center.

"From the development of effective therapies for tuberculosis and implantable cardiac pacemakers, to the first successful liver transplant and the nicotine patch, VA's trail-blazing research accomplishments are a source of great pride to VA and the nation," said Dr. Timothy O'Leary,

VA's chief research and development officer. "The impact of VA research on Veterans' lives stretches back to the 1920s, when researchers reported on studies looking at treatments for malaria, the long-term health effects of chemical warfare and mortality among Veterans with mental illness."

To learn more about the work of VA researchers, past and present, visit www.research.va.gov. For more information on local and national events marking National VA Research Week, visit www.research.va.gov/researchweek.

Results Of Camp Lejeune Health Studies To Be Presented

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) invites the public to hear from the authors of a group of health studies conducted to understand the impact of exposure to contaminated drinking water at Camp Lejeune. The authors will discuss the study results during a public meeting at 6 p.m. on May 12. The quarterly Community Assistance Panel meeting will take place at 9 a.m. on May 13. Both meetings will take place at the Embassy Suites Greensboro-Airport Hotel 204 Centreport Drive Greensboro.

Choice Card Program Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who is eligible for the program?

A: A Veteran must have been enrolled in VA health care on or before Aug. 1, 2014, or be eligible to enroll as a combat Veteran. Additionally, a Veteran must also meet at least one of the following criteria:

- The Veteran is told that he/she will need to wait more than 30 days for an appointment from the date clinically determined by his/her physician or, if no such date is provided, the Veteran's preferred date.
- The Veteran's residence is more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility.
- The Veteran resides in a location that is 40 miles or less from a VA medical facility and faces an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to a VA medical facility based on the presence of a body of water.

Q: How do Veterans get care authorized and make an appointment?

A: Veterans must call the Choice Program Call Center at 866-606-8198 to verify eligibility and set up an appointment.

Q: What mapping tool is used to calculate the 40 miles?

A: VA will use the commercial product that is used by VA's long-established beneficiary travel program. Because different mapping tools use different proprietary programming, the results may vary among products.

Q: Is the distance calculated the same way that is used to calculate mileage for beneficiary travel?

A: The mapping tool for beneficiary travel will now calculate the driving distance using the fastest route rather than the shortest route. This is a change to the beneficiary travel program that will make the distance determinations under the beneficiary travel program consistent with distance calculations under the Veterans Choice Program. The fastest route was chosen as the standard to ensure fairness to Veterans.

Q: Is it still 40 miles from any VA medical facility or is it 40 miles from a VA medical facility that actually provides the care needed?

A: This Choice Act requires VA to measure the distance from the Veteran's residence to the closest VA medical facility, even if that facility does not provide the care that is needed. Absent a statutory change, VA does not have the flexibility to adopt an alternative approach. We are working with Congress to seek possible alternatives.

Q: How does VA plan to notify newly eligible Veterans?

A: All potentially eligible Veterans already received a Veterans Choice Card. VA will send follow-up letters notifying Veterans who are eligible under the revised mileage calculation.

Q: Who can a Veteran call if they have questions about the Veterans Choice Program or do not remember receiving their Veterans Choice Card?

A: Veterans can call 866-606-8198 or contact one of the Choice Champions at their local VA Medical Center listed below.

Choice Card Program Points Of Contact		
Asheville	Gene Morris	828-298-7911 ext 4003
Asheville	Anthony Salinardi	828-298-7911 ext 5019
Beckley	Gary Eskins	304-255-2121 ext 4702
Beckley	Ida Trent	304-255-2121 ext 4460
Durham	Christine Bryant	919-286-0411 ext 8081
Durham	Clarence Lea	919-286-0411 ext 6247
Fayetteville	Ira Shaw	910-488-2120 ext 7971
Fayetteville	Jeffrey Stanko	910-488-2120 ext 7032
Hampton	Kevin Amick	757-722-9961 ext 3061
Hampton	Mary Truss	757-722-9961 ext 4994
Salem	Janet Zellis	540-982-2463 ext 2761
Salem	Christina Beaver	540-982-2463 ext 4294
Salisbury	Angela Gilley	704-638-9000 ext 2365
Salisbury	Pam Malatestinic	704-638-9000 ext 2018
Richmond	Nora L. Vanderpool	804-675-5387
Richmond	Alison Faulk	804-675-6242

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

Fayetteville CBOC
2919 Breezewood Avenue, Ste 101
Fayetteville, NC 28304
910-488-2120, Ext. 6100/6101
800-771-6106, Ext. 6100/6101

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
919-731-4809

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, Suite 1
Midway Park, NC 28544
910-353-6406

Jacksonville II CBOC
306 Brynn Marr Road
Jacksonville, NC 28546
910-343-5301

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 Lacy B. King 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
2301 Robeson Street
Fayetteville, NC 28305
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