



"Excellent Care – Earned by Veterans – Delivered Here"

Voices of VISN 6

Official news from around your VISN

Vol. 7, No. 6

April 30, 2017

Secretary Shulkin Visits Durham, Provides 100 Day Update

By Sharonda Pearson,
Durham VAMC
Public Affairs

VA's ninth Secretary of Veterans Affairs, David J. Shulkin, visited Durham VA April 28 to highlight the progress made for Veterans during President Donald Trump's 100th day in office.

"While many challenges remain, and we have a lot of work to do in the next 100 days, thanks to the president's leadership, and bipartisan support in Congress, we have made significant progress

on a number of important fronts for Veterans in the last three months," VA's top leader said during his press conference.

Changes in the last three months that were highlighted by Shulkin included reauthorization of the Choice Act, employee accountability legislation, the agency's new easy-to-use Access and Quality of care public website, a new predictive modeling tool to reach Veterans at the highest risk for suicide, and providing mental

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Linnie Skidmore Shani Roebuck, a Registered Nurse at Durham VA's Cardiac Intensive Care Unit (CICU), discusses a Tele-medicine best practice during an employee roundtable with VA Secretary David J. Shulkin April 28.

President Visits VA, Signs Accountability Order

President Donald J. Trump visited the Department of Veterans Affairs April 27 to thank Veterans for their service, and VA employees for their work helping Veterans.

While at the VA, the president signed an Executive Order entitled, "Improving Accountability and Whistleblower Protection at the Department of Veterans Affairs," and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. David Shulkin made three key announcements at the VA's Central Office.

The executive order is focused on improving "accountability and whistleblower protection" at the VA by creating an



VA Courtesy Photo President Donald Trump signs the "Improving Accountability and Whistleblower Protection at the Department of Veterans Affairs" Executive Order April 27.

office dedicated to that purpose and the position of Special Assistant to the Secretary who will report

directly to the secretary and serve as executive di-

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From The Director

We in VA have been devastated by the disturbingly high number of Veterans who have taken their own lives in recent years. The thought that even one Veteran considers suicide is heartbreaking, and VA is committed to eliminating suicide among Veterans.



Mark Shelhorse

Recently, VA published the statistic of 20 Veterans a day dying from suicide. We care about what happens to every single Veteran, not just those we happen to know about. We must all be vigilant and alert to the signs of emotional distress in persons we encounter. We all need to be aware of ways we can help, whether or not we are part of VA mental health staff. Suicide is everyone's business.

Beyond encouraging Veterans to enroll for VA health care, where they will have access to mental health care if needed, we all need to know the signs of distress, because we can encounter persons in crisis anywhere. A call to the Veterans Crisis Line (800-273-8255) or the National Suicide Hotline (800-784-2433) will get the ball rolling to immediate and or follow-up care.

VA emphasizes training for all our staff to recognize and respond to the signs of emotional distress. More of us, especially those of us outside VA, need to know the signs as well, and how to deal with them, to help alleviate the problem of Veterans and others in emotional peril. Next month we will include some steps everyone can take to help. If you would like to learn more now, please feel free to check out <http://zerosuicide.sprc.org/> toolkit or VA suicide prevention tips.

I implore each of you to recognize the need for a community effort. There are elements of this problem that are so diverse, each of us can take to heart and apply our passion toward the need to change the stigma of mental illness, emotional distress, suicide and lethal means education. The problem must be addressed with responsibility by medical associations and gun advocates, Veterans organizations, and social services of all types. Leaders in business can participate as well as others in non- or not-for-profit organizations. They

can help disseminate information, offer services to help research the problem and develop more comprehensive and accurate statistics and other data. They can influence policy and potentially influence the way we all think about mental health.

Veteran suicide is a national tragedy that requires everyone's effort to focus on awareness and be a part of prevention efforts. Suicide is everyone's business.

Sincerely,

Mark Shelhorse

Green Announces Departure

Compelled by an inner motivation to make a change, Kaye Green, director of Salisbury VAMC recently announced she would be leaving the facility's helm at the end of May.



Kaye Green

"Just as I felt called to Salisbury five years ago, my family and I now feel called to accept an opportunity to serve in a hospital much closer to our family in New Mexico," Green said in a recent statement.

Under Green's Leadership, the Salisbury VA Health Care System has achieved many accomplishments in recent years, including the seamless activation of two of VA's largest new Health Care Centers, a new Mental Health Center of Excellence, VA's first free-standing "Cardiac Cath Lab" in Kernersville, robotic and joint replacement surgery, interventional nephrology, and numerous other clinical expansions and new services, as well as tremendous improvements in access, including the creation of same day services in primary care at all three sites.

With regard to the provision of quality care for Veterans, Green remarked, "I am so proud that our Salisbury/Charlotte/Kernersville facilities have once again achieved a 4-star ranking (out of 5), based on the most current data." While a permanent replacement has yet to be named, leadership of the facility will be shared by current Associate Director Linette Baker and Chief of Staff Subbarao Pemmaraju, M.D.

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

Questions or comments about the newsletter, e-mail stephen.wilkins2@va.gov or call 919-956-5541.



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Asheville VA Opens New Oncology, Infusion Center

On March 30, the Charles George VA Medical Center in Asheville held a ribbon cutting ceremony for a new Oncology and Infusion Center after months of renovation and hard work by CGVAMC staff.

Oncology and Infusion services in the center moved from their old location on the third floor of the medical center to the new location on the first floor in proximity to outpatient services. The new center is 7,610 square feet, more than 230% bigger than the old clinic area. The increased size allowed for Radiation Oncology to be incorporated into the space for better coordination of care for oncology patients and the new Infusion Center is now equipped with 11 comfortable treatment recliners for patients to use, increasing the capacity from eight.

“Cancer is a difficult journey for patients and their families,” said Medical Center Director Cynthia Breyfogle. “With our staff’s care and encouragement walking side by side with our Veterans, they make it through. We believe this new space will make that care more comfortable and convenient for everyone.”

From the patient’s perspective they will notice that they can now avoid much of the congestion of other parts of the medical center by being dropped off from their cars only a few yards from the entrance to the cen-



Scott Pittillo
L-R, Dr. Ashfaq Ahsanuddin, Pamela Johnson, and Cynthia Breyfogle cut the ribbon for the Oncology and Infusion Center March 30.

ter. The center itself has a lot more natural light and special care was taken care to make sure there was room for family members to be able to accompany Veterans

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Durham VA Opens Parking Garage Welcome Center

By Sharonda Pearson
Durham VAHCS Public Affairs

As part of efforts to become a more customer-service orientated organization, the Durham VA Health Care System officially opened a parking garage welcome center May 1. Services include patient wheelchair transportation to and from Veteran patient appointments. Welcome Center staff is also available to answer questions and provide directions to Veterans visiting the medical center.

“Our vision is to be the benchmark of excellence and value in healthcare for the Veterans we serve,” Durham VA Health Care System Director DeAnne Seekins said during her remarks. “I would like to thank the planning committee for all of their hard work to make our new welcome center a reality. An outstanding patient experience will begin right here—before Veterans ever enter the building, which is how it should be.”



Linnie Skidmore
Durham VA Health Care System Director DeAnne Seekins, Chief Nurse Executive Greg Eagerton, Assistant Director Dan Fields and members of the Welcome Center planning committee participate in the May 1 Welcome Center ribbon cutting. The initiative to open the Welcome Center was launched as result of OEF-OIF Veteran Joseph Tyler’s feedback regarding his experience having to help another Veteran to his appointment.

VISN 6 System-Wide Environmental Stewardship Recognized

For standard-setting sustainability achievements, The Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network (VISN 6) received a System for Change Environmental Excellence Award from Practice Greenhealth, a leading organization dedicated to environmental sustainability in health care. The award is given each year to honor environmental achievements in the health care sector.

“Actually VISN 6 medical centers did exceptionally well on winning Practice Greenhealth Awards in 2017, including the VISN itself,” according to VISN 6 Green Environmental Management System (GEMS) Coordinator Wendy Kady.

The System for Change Award recognizes health systems working cohesively and across hospitals and facilities to set and meet goals related to sustainability, from reducing their energy use to increasing recycling and establishing green building practices.

System for Change Award winners have at least four acute-care hospitals and have demonstrated cohesive and effective strategies to achieve sustainability. VISN 6 facilities gaining distinction in three categories include Hampton VAMC, which has been honored with the Circle of Excellence Award for its dedicated focus, as one of 10 of the highest performing hospitals in each area of sustainability expertise in energy and water. For the distinction, the facility has also achieved Greenhealth

Partner for Change Award status and demonstrates outstanding performance and metrics in at least one specific area of sustainability.

Asheville, Durham, Richmond and Salisbury VAMCs have been recognized for implementing a significant number of environmental programs, and continuously improving and expanding upon these programs on the path to sustainability, with the Greenhealth Partner for Change award. This is Asheville VAMC’s second consecutive year in receiving the recognition.

The Fayetteville VAMC earned the Greenhealth Emerald Award for demonstrating a strong commitment to sustainability and community leadership by setting the standard in eliminating mercury, reducing and recycling waste, sustainable sourcing, and other areas.

“As a system, the VISN strives to make a difference in our communities by reducing our environmental impact and emphasizing sustainable practices,” said Kady, adding that “all the GEMS Coordinators and Energy Engineers put forth a good deal of effort submitting for these awards and demonstrating the sustainability efforts at their respective facility.”

The award will be presented at the Practice Greenhealth Environmental Excellence Awards Gala, set for May 18th in Minneapolis, Minn. at the conclusion of the CleanMed Conference & Exhibition.

VA Announces 3rd Shark Tank Competition Semifinalists

By Shereef Elnahal

Subject matter experts from around the VA reviewed over 350 applications for the Third Under Secretary for Health (USH) Shark Tank Competition and selected 100 semifinalist applications to proceed to the next round.

Program office and VSO leaders will evaluate the 100 semifinalist practices and select approximately 20 Finalists to compete in the virtual USH Third Shark Tank Competition on June 13.

Of the 100 semifinalist practices, there is representation across all priority categories. Semifinalist applicants represent a wide array of VHA employees including nurses, service chiefs, and program managers/analysts.

During his tenure as USH, Secretary David Shulkin created the Diffusion of Excellence Initiative to identify and disseminate promising practices, as well as standardize those that promote positive outcomes for Veterans system-wide. As part of the initiative, the USH Shark Tank Competition invites all VHA employees to solicit promising practices that address the USH’s priorities of improving access, care coordination, employee engagement, quality and safety, and the Veteran experience.

VISN 6 Shark Tank Semifinalists		
FACILITY	PRACTICE NAME	SUBMITTED BY
Asheville VAMC	Successfully streamlined management program for Veterans with tinnitus.	Jenifer Beck
Durham VAMC	EKG process for capturing workload credit.	Susan Roberts
	Gerofit: Improving the lives of Veterans	Susan Roberts
Hampton VAMC	Decreasing average processing days for compensation and pension claims.	Janice Sequeira
Salisbury VAMC	Primary Care: Prosthetics same day care initiative.	Subbarao Pemmaraju
	Salisbury VAMC immediate scheduling.	Kenneth Mortimer

Salem VA Staff Quick To React As Boy Falls Off Ledge

On March 25, staff members Renee Belliveau, Tammy Angell, Katelyn Creedon, Becca Cantrell, Patrick Stultz, and Sung Lee were hiking at Devils Marble Yard in Rockbridge County, Va. when they encountered two young boys playing on a nearby ledge. They witnessed one of the boys slip and fall 15 to 20 feet off the ledge.

Tammy Angell, a nurse in the Ear Nose & Throat clinic was first on the scene and went to the aid of the boy and instructed him not to move so she could assess the extent of his injuries. The boy complained of lower back pain, had abrasions on his arms, a nosebleed, and a hematoma forming on his left forehead. He was able to move all four extremities but was told of the importance of not moving to maintain cervical alignment in the event of a possible cervical fracture. Angell kept the boy calm and provided reassurance while Angell's daughter, a student at James Madison University and another student from Liberty University called emergency medical services (EMS) for help.

Another nurse, Renee Belliveau, Safe Patient Handler, arrived to offer assistance keeping the boy still and performed neurological checks every 15 minutes to report to EMS upon arrival.

Katelyn Creedon, a social worker in acute medical surgery and Sung Lee, pharmacy resident intern provided assistance in keeping the boy calm.

Becca Cantrell, clinical nurse leader in acute medical surgery, and Patrick Stultz, contracting officer, were able to prevent additional onlookers from interfering while waiting for EMS to arrive. For the next two hours, our employees stayed with the boy until EMS could arrive.

When EMS did arrive, our employees assisted EMS in placing a c-collar, transferring the boy to a backboard, starting an IV and moved the boy into a basket



Courtesy Photo

Salem VAMC staff members turned into first responders when a boy fell from a ledge at a Virginia State park recently. The group is being recognized May 5 at the facility for their heroic efforts.

that EMS used to carry him down the ledge. It took another two hours to get him to an ambulance to be transported to meet a helicopter, which would airlift the boy to Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital. Because of these Salem VA Medical Center's employees vigilant actions the injured boy received the emergency medical treatment he needed.

Thanks to these employees' compassion and care for this boy, as well as their quick assessment and action. This is just one example of how these Salem VA Medical Center employees exemplify the I-CARE values, whether they are caring for our nation's heroes or a young boy in the community.

Oncology continued from Pg 3

during their appointments. Also, during treatment DVD players and DVDs are offered to help pass the time.

"When you walk in here, you'll see how much light there is", said Dr. Ashfaq Ahsanuddin Director of the Oncology and Infusion Center. "That really changes the way that people feel, its warm and inviting. It's no longer the sterile clinical space we had before."

Ahsanuddin went on to say that while they were proud of the new facility he was really most proud of his nurses who really dug into what patients needed and what the facility really needed to change with the new space.

Services offered by the new Oncology and Infusion Center include:

Chemotherapy and immunotherapy administration,

Blood and blood product transfusions, Therapeutic phlebotomy, IV Hydration therapy, Immune globulin therapy, Iron replacement therapy, Therapeutic infusion and injection services, Porta-cath maintenance, Insertion, care and removal of peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC) and central venous catheter, IV antibiotic therapy, Central venous access device maintenance (PICC line and implanted ports), Enzyme deficiency replacement, Disease specific specialty drug therapy (Gastrointestinal diseases, Gaucher disease, Fabry disease, multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, Behcet's disease, Vogt-Koyanagi-Harada disease and Bone Marrow Biopsies.

For more information please go to www.asheville.va.gov or www.facebook.com/ashevilleVAMC/.

Veterans Far & Wide Find Prostate Cancer Cure At McGuire

By Patrick Gordon,
McGuire VAMC Public Affairs Specialist

Thanks to the nationwide scope of the Veterans Health Administration, a national referral program has allowed Veterans from around the country to descend on the McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond for treatment of moderate to aggressive forms of prostate cancer.

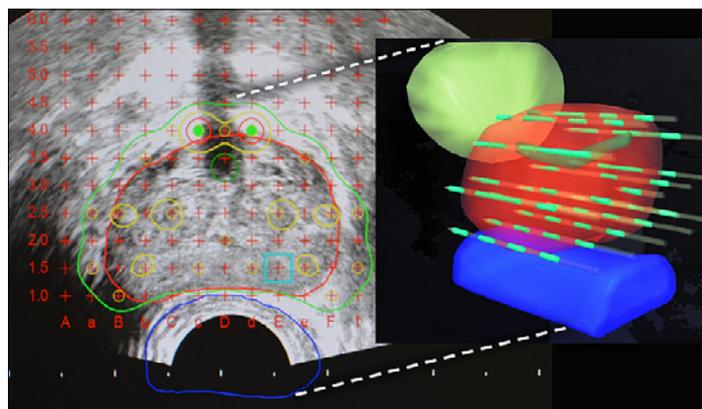
Prostate cancer is the second-most common type of cancer among American men, who make up the largest population of Veterans. The most common form of treatment in most VA facilities is external beam radiation, a six to nine week process that involves treatments five days a week.

At McGuire, brachytherapy offers a much better option for Veterans. Brachytherapy is a form of treatment that involves implanting radiated seeds directly into the prostate, where the seeds attack and eliminate the cancerous cells. McGuire's brachytherapy program dates back to the 1990s.

Dr. Drew Moghanaki, an attending physician in McGuire's Radiation/Oncology department, currently leads the brachytherapy program.

"What we offer is access to high-quality treatment of prostate cancer with minimal side effects and recovery period," said Moghanaki.

Research has shown brachytherapy to be a more effective treatment for moderate to aggressive forms of



Courtesy Graphic

Doctors use ultrasound and 3D imaging to plan the placement of radioactive seeds into the prostate for brachytherapy.

prostate cancer. Additionally, the treatment is completed in one day, allowing Veterans to quickly get back to their regular lives.

Veterans from places like Michigan, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico and many other areas around the country have come to McGuire to take advantage of this innovative treatment. It's only available in a handful of VA facilities, including McGuire.

Research has shown brachytherapy is safer for the

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Shulkin Visit continued from Pg 1



Linnie Skidmore

Durham VA Patient Advocate Deon Mangum speaks to Secretary David Shulkin regarding issues with the Choice program and Patient Advocate Tracking System during his April 28 visit.

health services to former service members with other than honorable discharges.

Shulkin said the team would be working even harder over the next 100 days to pass legislation that provides Veterans more options for care, and Accountability Legislation and Appeals Reform, expanding same day services in primary care and mental health to all CBOCs, and launching Getting to Zero—a new suicide prevention initiative.

In addition to providing an update, Shulkin also met with Durham VA leadership and staff to discuss medical center best practices and any issues hindering the staff from providing the highest quality care to Veterans. During his remarks, Shulkin thanked the Durham team for their "extraordinary steps to best serve the Veterans in North Carolina and their commitment to honoring President Lincoln's vision."

Shulkin's visit also included tours of the Hospice Unit construction site and Radiology/Oncology Unit, as well as the MICU, Catheterization Lab, 1-F Primary Care Unit, and Emergency Department.

Hampton VAMC Staff Gives Back In Portsmouth, Va.

By Brett Robbins
VISN 6 Public Affairs

A team of VA staff recently helped make life a little easier for some nearby women in need and their families.

For the last three years, Hampton VAMC's Home Telehealth Service has been donating care packages to the Health and Emergency Response Shelter in Portsmouth, Va., a private, non-profit agency that offering 24-hour emergency hotline and housing for women who fear for their safety, and their children. Their most recent gift was dropped off to the shelter April 29.

The Telehealth Service team finds it in their heart every year to give back to the community and their love for people is why they continue to donate each year! "We donate in a quiet manner," according to primary care nurse Frances Reid. The group is inspired by a Winston Churchill quote stating, "You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give."

Thanks to their compassion and care for people in need, whether Veterans or others in the community, the team's most recent donation of 20 care packages to the Shelter included personal hygiene items and other essential products that are hard to keep on the shelf, as residents go through them continually. The care packages were given to women and children in need that were receiving assistance through the shelter. The shel-



Courtesy Photo

Hampton Home Telehealth staff give back to the community through donations to a local women's shelter. Pictured (l-r) are Janine Millete, Queen Berger, Mary Haagenson, Ruby Franklin, Jane Curtis, Frances Reid, Latashia Newsome, and Lisa Mercer.

ter houses between 15 to 20 women at a time.

This is just one example of how these Hampton VA Medical Center employees exemplify the I-CARE values, whether they are caring for our Nation's Heroes or people in the community that are in need.

Durham Chief Receives Voluntary Service Award For Excellence

Durham's Chief of Voluntary Service Ronni Miller recently received VA's Voluntary Service Award for Excellence. "Ronni's passion for the role, her love of our Veterans, and her integration in daily operations is unrivaled. Voluntary Service is an integral part of our operation at the Durham VA Healthcare System and the impact of our volunteers is fully realized because of Ronni's ability to weave them into critical roles," said Durham VA Health Care System Director DeAnne Seekins.

Under Miller's leadership, Durham's Voluntary Service program received more than 129,700 hours of volunteer time from 1,158 volunteers and \$375,500 in donations last year. She also launched a Haircut Day program for the medical center's Community Living Center residents, a Food Pantry to help feed Veterans and their families during times of need, Operation Cold Front, which provides new coats, gloves, scarves and hats to Veterans during winter, and a program to fulfill the final wish of hospice patients.

"Ronni is a tireless advocate for the Veterans, their families and the VA," Added Seekins, concluding that, "She is known for her passion and selfless devotion to those men and women that gave so much and represents the very best the VA has to offer. I can think of no other more deserving person for this Award of Excellence."



Dr. Brice Weinberg

Ronni Miller

Wait Times For Patients Now Transparent For Veterans

VA is taking unprecedented steps to increase transparency. Today, VA launched a new Access and Quality Tool that provides Veterans with an easy-to-use, easy-to-understand way of accessing patient wait time and quality of care data. This tool not only provides Veterans with more information about VA services, it increases accountability and ensures VA is held to a higher standard.

“Veterans must have access to information that is clear and understandable to make informed decisions about their health care,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. David J. Shulkin. “No other health-care system in the country releases this type of information on wait times. This allows Veterans to see how VA is performing.”

The tool allows Veterans to access the average times patients are waiting to be seen in their local area; how Veterans describe their experiences scheduling pri-

mary- and specialty-care appointments at specific VA facilities; timeliness of appointments for care needed right away; and the quality of health care delivered at VA medical centers compared with local private-sector hospitals. The Access and Quality Tool is the most transparent and easy to understand wait time and quality data website in the health-care industry.

“This tool is another example of VA leading the way,” said Acting Under Secretary for Health Dr. Poonam Alaigh. “No one in the private sector publishes data this way. This tool will instill a spirit of competition and encourage our medical facilities to proactively address access and quality issues while empowering Veterans to make choices according to what works best for them and their families.”

VA will continue to make improvements to this tool based on the feedback it receives from Veterans. View the tool at www.accesstocare.va.gov.

Prostate continued from Pg 6

patient, minimizing radiation to the prostate area and drastically reducing recovery time.

For Veterans around the country whose local facilities don't offer brachytherapy treatment, the national referral program gives them a chance to receive top-notch care at McGuire without leaving the VA system. “Many Veterans prefer to stay within the VA,” said Moghanaki. “We make that happen. It increases access for Veterans in areas where the VA doesn't offer radiation services onsite. We're leaving no man behind.”

Nurse Practitioner Sandy Troeschel is the brachytherapy clinical program manager. She helps determine which patients are eligible to come to McGuire for brachytherapy and works with them to make treatment plans.

Using the VA's telehealth system, she is able to meet with Veterans through a video chat and walk them through the intake process. Once she has the information she needs to proceed, a social worker assists with arranging transportation to Richmond. Often, organizations like Mercy Medical Angels assist with transportation costs for Veterans who need it.

“It has been very successful,” Troeschel said. “Patients have been very happy. It's a fantastic program and it's expanding.”

Carlos Alvarez, a Veteran who lives in Puerto Rico, was diagnosed with moderately aggressive prostate cancer.

Local doctors were running out of options. That's when he was referred to McGuire for brachytherapy. From that point on, the process was a quick and easy one, Alvarez said.

After Troeschel determined Alvarez was a strong candidate for the treatment, he came to Richmond for the procedure.

“I went to Virginia, got everything hooked up, they did the procedure and the following morning, I was on my way home,” said Alvarez.

After Alvarez went home to Puerto Rico, the doctors at his local VA were able to follow up with him and had access to all of the information about his treatment at McGuire.

“Everything is documented in their records,” said Troeschel. “It doesn't matter if things are done here or at their home VA facility, all the information is there.” For the brachytherapy team, the continuity of care is a key to success.

“We've definitely improved access to brachytherapy for Veterans,” said Brachytherapy RN Steven Schlink. “We're filling a need, bringing people from all over. So far, we've had nothing but positive feedback. It's a great program.”

Approximately 100 brachytherapy procedures are performed at McGuire each year. Some of these Veterans are from the Richmond area, but many are Veterans who have been referred from other areas and who otherwise might have had to resort to weeks of external beam radiation treatment.



VA Announces Hiring Freeze Changes

VA recently announced an update to its hiring-freeze guidelines for the Department.

Effectively immediately, hiring restrictions are removed for the Veterans Health Administration's medical facilities; for medical and non-medical positions; and for Veterans Benefits Administration regional and field offices. The VA's National Cemetery Administration had no restrictions and this remains unchanged.

However, in order to streamline VA's corporate

structure and administrative positions, VA will maintain a process that requires thorough review before hiring. Hiring in the administrations must have the appropriate Under Secretary level approval; and at VA's Central Office, the Chief of Staff must approve.

"VA is committed to serving Veterans, but at the same time improving efficiency and reducing bureaucracy," said Dr. David J. Shulkin, Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Accountability Order continued from Pg 1

rector of the office.

The new executive director "will report directly to me as secretary so that we can identify barriers that are preventing us from removing employees and people that we have identified that should no longer be working at VA," said Shulkin. "We want make sure that we have employees who work hard and are committed to the mission of serving our Veterans."

The VA will establish the office and appoint the executive director within 45 days of the signing of the executive order.

The executive director will advise and assist the secretary in using all available authorities to discipline or terminate any VA manager or employee who has violated the public's trust and failed to carry out his or her duties on behalf of Veterans. The executive director will also assist the secretary in recruiting, rewarding, and retaining high-performing employees.

At the signing ceremony for the executive order, Shulkin also announced three new key initiatives at the department.

VA Partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services

VA is entering a partnership agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services that will allow the assignment of medical professionals from the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps to provide direct patient care to Veterans in VA hospitals and clinics in underserved communities.

"My priority has been to improve access to care for our nation's heroes," said Shulkin. "By partnering with our colleagues at HHS, we will enhance the availability of clinical care in those areas most in need."

The initial agreement enables up to 20 officers from the Commissioned Corps to treat Veterans in VA facilities that are most in need of staffing support. The agreement also allows up to 10 more officers to help support coordination for Veterans receiving non-VA community care.

New Fraud, Waste and Abuse Taskforce

The secretary announced a major new initiative to detect and prevent fraud, waste and abuse in the Depart-

ment of Veterans Affairs. Effective today, this initiative has the potential to save tens of millions of taxpayer dollars currently at risk, for fraud, waste and abuse that can be redirected to better serve Veterans.

The initiative will include bringing in the leading thinkers from the private sector and other government organizations in an advisory committee to identify and leverage cutting-edge fraud detection tools and coordinate all fraud, waste and abuse detection and reporting activities across the department through a single office.

The department has identified potential savings in the area of improper payments to health care providers, major contracts, contracts for pharmaceuticals, and the delivery of benefits to Veterans. "Restoring the trust of Veterans and improving system-wide accountability are among my top priorities.

It's essential to ensure that all our employees and the companies that we do business with are being good stewards of the resources available to care for our Veterans," said Shulkin.

Removing Red Tape at State-owned Veteran Nursing Homes

Effective today, VA is amending guidelines to allow state-owned Veteran nursing homes to follow state guidelines in the construction design of their facilities - removing red tape, while increasing access to services for Veterans.

Up to now, to qualify for federal grant funding for Veteran nursing homes in their state, governors and state officials have had to follow federal construction design guidelines. With today's announcement by the secretary, that is no longer the case, and governors are freed up to follow their own state guidelines in the construction design of these facilities while still qualifying for the same level of federal grant funding as before.

In announcing the move, Secretary Shulkin noted that state design guidelines already are sufficient to the task of providing safe conditions for our Veterans and the department recognizes the need to move quickly to reduce unnecessary barriers to providing much needed services to our Veterans.

VA Partners With DOE To Improve Health Care For Veterans

VA and the Department of Energy (DOE) recently announced the formation of a new partnership focused on the secure analysis of large digital health and genomic data, or so-called “big data,” from the VA and other federal sources to help advance health care for Veterans and others in areas such as suicide prevention, cancer and heart disease, while also driving DOE’s next-generation supercomputing designs.

Known as the VA-DOE Big Data Science Initiative, the partnership will be based within DOE’s National Laboratory system, one of the world’s top resources for supercomputing. The effort will leverage the latest DOE expertise and technologies in big data, artificial intelligence and high-performance computing to identify trends that will support the development of new treatments and preventive strategies.

“VA has developed unparalleled health data trend information from some 24 million Veterans who have used VA for health care over the past two decades,” said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. “We are partnering with DOE to use their high-performance computing capabilities to allow thousands of researchers access to this unprecedented data resource over time in a secure environment. The transformative science that will be developed through this partnership will improve health care for Veterans and all Americans.”

DOE high-performance computing represents the state of the art in global computer science, involving machines capable of millions of billions of calculations per second.

VA takes privacy seriously and has ensured all reasonable safeguards are in place to protect the records at the DOE National Laboratory.

“Driving innovation through our national laboratories in ways that can improve Veterans’ health care is a remarkable opportunity,” said DOE Secretary Rick Perry. “I look forward to working together to shape this VA-DOE partnership.”

One part of the new initiative is MVP-CHAMPION—short for the Million Veteran Program (MVP) Computational Health Analytics for Medical Precision to Improve Outcomes Now. MVP, VA’s landmark

genomics program, has already enrolled more than 560,000 Veteran volunteers, who have provided DNA samples; completed surveys about their health, lifestyle and military experiences; and granted secure access to their electronic health records for research purposes. The partnership with DoE will maximize the impact of studies using MVP data.

Along with data from MVP and VA’s electronic health records system, the new VA-DOE program will use health data from the Department of Defense, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and the Center for Disease Control’s National Death Index.

An initial suite of specific studies that are part of VA-DOE Big Data Science Initiative is already being planned. One aims to build algorithms to generate highly tailored personalized risk scores for suicide. The scores could be used by VA clinicians and researchers to help predict which patients are at the highest risk, and to evaluate prevention strategies. The researchers will work with VA’s Office of Suicide Prevention to enhance current algorithms already in use in VA.

Another project on prostate cancer will seek new ways to tell which tumors are lethal versus nonlethal and require treatment, and, by contrast, others that are slow growing and unlikely to cause any symptoms. Yet another study will explore what sets of risk factors are the best predictors of certain forms of cardiovascular disease to inform individualized therapy and treatments for patients based on their individual risk factors.

For more information on MVP, informatics and VA research in general, visit www.research.va.gov.



VA Compliance and Ethics Week Is May 1-5

National Compliance and Ethics Week (C&E Week) was observed nationwide May 1-5, cosponsored by the Office of Compliance and Business Integrity and the National Center for Ethics in Health Care through its Integrated Ethics program. This year’s theme was “Being Our Best for Veterans.”

C&E Week celebrates the importance of organiza-

tional integrity, business compliance and ICARE values in providing the best services and care to our nation’s Veterans. The week was also a reminder to speak up if you have ethical, compliance or business integrity concerns. For VA employees interested in more information on speaking up, visit the [Addressing Moral Distress—Speaking Up](#) web page.

VA Offers Help For Post Partum Depression

VA is elevating women Veteran's awareness of postpartum depression, providing education around symptom identification, disparaging myths, and highlighting the many resources and treatments VA and Women's Health Services (WHS) offers to women Veterans.

Postpartum depression can occur after having a baby, and is the most common complication of childbirth, affecting 1 in 7 new mothers. Left untreated, postpartum depression can have long lasting consequences, threatening the health of new mothers, their babies, and their families.

Postpartum depression is never anyone's fault and affects more than half a million American women each year. Unfortunately, only about 15 percent of women who suffer from postpartum depression receive professional care due to misdiagnosis, denial, stigma, and lack of health care access.

Postpartum depression can begin anytime within the first year after childbirth. Symptoms of Post partum depression may include: feeling sad, down, or depressed; losing interest in what you usually enjoy; experiencing difficulty in thinking or decision making; loss of appetite; experiencing a loss of energy; and fre-

quently thinking about death or suicide.

VA and WHS offer a suite of care options to help women Veterans get treatment for postpartum depression. If you have any questions please contact vhaco10b2media@va.gov.



Trust her to find answers.
The Women Veterans Call Center is your guide to VA.

Call 1-855-VA-WOMEN (1-855-829-6636)
Anonymous Chat at www.womenshealth.va.gov

Hours of Operation:
Mon-Fri 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET
Sat. 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. ET

1.855.VA.WOMEN WOMEN VETERANS CALL CENTER U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



MAY 26-29 2017 SAVE THE DATE

2017 FREEDOM BALLOON FEST

WWW.WRALFREEDOMBALLOONFEST.COM

Fleming Loop Park | Fuquay-Varina, NC

Festival Food - Merchant, Arts & Crafts Village - Military Displays & Exhibits - Field Games - Music - Chef's Challenge - Children & Family Friendly - Tethered Balloon Rides - Competition Flying Demonstrations - Nightly Balloon Glow



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/

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

Charlotte HCC
3506 W. Tyvola Rd.
Charlotte, NC 28208
704-329-1300

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

Chesapeake CBOC
1987 S. Military Highway
Chesapeake, Va 23320
757-722-9961

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 HCC
7300 So. Raeford Rd
Fayetteville NC 28304
910-488-2120
800-771-6106

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

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

Fredericksburg at Southpoint CBOC
10401 Spotsylvania Ave, Ste 300
Fredericksburg, VA 22408
540-370-4468

Goldsboro CBOC
2610 Hospital Road
Goldsboro, NC 27909
919-731-4809

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
4006 Henderson Drive
Jacksonville, NC 28546
910-353-6406

Kernersville HCC
1695 Kernersville Medical Pkwy
Kernersville, NC 27284
336-515-5000

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

Raleigh III CBOC
2600 Atlantic Ave, Ste 200
Raleigh, NC 27604
919-755-2620

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

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

Sanford CBOC
3112 Tramway Road
Sanford, NC 27332
919-775-6160

Staunton CBOC
102 Lacy B. King Way
Staunton, VA 24401
540-886-5777

Tazewell CBOC
141 Ben Bolt Ave.
Tazewell, VA 24651
276-988-8860

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

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

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

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
3515 W Market Street, Suite 120
Greensboro, NC 27403
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

Raleigh Vet Center
8851 Ellstree Lane
Raleigh, NC 27617
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