

FALL 2011



VETERANS' HEALTH CARE ADVANTAGE

THE WELLNESS MAGAZINE FOR NEW YORK/NEW JERSEY VETERANS



VA
HEALTH
CARE

Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century

NETWORK DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Veterans,

I am pleased to provide you with the VA New York/New Jersey Health Care Network fall edition of Veterans' Health Care Advantage magazine. The news magazine provides an overview of important information concerning health care services and initiatives provided for Veterans in our Network.

In this edition, we review the recent upgrades to each VA health care facility's Internet home page as well as progress using Facebook and Twitter social media sites. Facility Web sites and social media sites provide real-time information that is important to Veterans, their loved ones, and the general public.

Another interesting update involves MyHealthVet. MyHealthVet is a web-based gateway for Veterans to find authoritative health information and a place to record important medical history. The site is secure and allows Veterans to view upcoming appointments, renew medications, and connect with their health care team using secure messaging. The article contains instructions on how to access MyHealthVet and includes names and phone numbers to call if you need assistance or have questions.

An informative article written by Care Line Manager for Geriatrics and Extended Care Wavell Hodge, MD describes kidney function and how kidney function is measured. The back page contains a complete listing of our VA medical centers and community clinics addresses and telephone numbers.

Please take a moment to review the Veterans' Health Care Advantage magazine. I hope you find that the information presented is useful.

Michael A. Sabo, FACHE
VISN 3 Director

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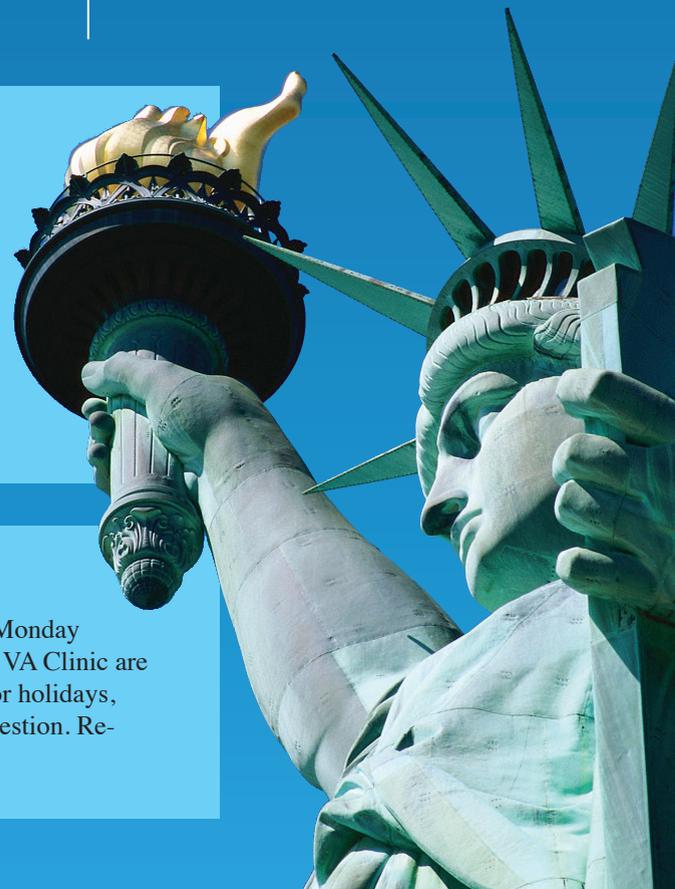


GET YOUR PRESCRIPTIONS ONLINE

You asked for it, and you got it! You can now use MyHealthVet – VA's online service for Veterans – to refill your prescriptions and view your prescription history online. To take advantage of this service, you must be a registered user of MyHealthVet. As a registered user, you will also have access to a Personal Health Journal where you can record and track your health statistics online. To register for these important benefits, visit www.myhealth.va.gov

WE'RE JUST A PHONE CALL AWAY

Veterans, do you have questions about your health? During weekdays (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), staff at your VA Medical Center or VA Clinic are available to assist. After 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, weekends or holidays, call the VA Nurses helpline at **1-800-877-6976** if you have a medical question. Remember to call 911 at any time if you're having a medical emergency.



WEB COMMUNICATIONS SWEEP NETWORK 3



Facebook isn't just for college kids anymore. The social networking tool that exploded a few years ago among college students has spread to their parents, grandparents, teachers and friends. And with that, Veterans and VA are on board as well.

While each facility in the NY/NJ Veterans Health Care Network has had an Internet presence for some time, VA gave a green light to facilities to create and maintain their own Facebook and Twitter pages. Each facility took the opportunity to create web content plans and Facebook pages which share "updates" and "notes" on topics important to veterans including medical, mental health and social services, initiatives and photos of events. The updates often promote healthy living, health education and disease prevention citing VA physicians, nurses, dietitians, psychologists, social workers, and pharmacists as local experts.

Facebook and Twitter updates incorporate VA public service announcements, relaying important information about VA's crisis hotline, flu vaccinations,

volunteer recruitment, stop loss pay deadlines, MyHealthVet and more. There are also tabs for "easy to access" information for Women Veterans, recently returned combat Veterans and other VA staples. And many posts are interactive, encouraging Veterans to share experiences and light-hearted comments.

"Social Media is essential to reaching Veterans, especially our newest generation, who use these tools on the battlefields of Iraq or Afghanistan today," said Sal Thomas, Public Relations Specialist at the Northport VAMC and combat Marine Veteran. "These tools give the VA a way to have real-time, two-way communication with our nation's heroes. The near-instant feedback is invaluable to our communication goals." For many Veterans and their families, Facebook is the preferred mode of communication. The site garners thousands of impressions daily, creating a positive, real-time feel for VA users. Combined, the facilities within VISN 3 posted approximately 500 posts on Facebook and a like number of "tweets" on Twitter. The VISN has also garnered a staggering 195,000 "post views" on Facebook in 2010.

"The goal with social media is to encourage Veterans and other stakeholders to post questions and comments inviting an increasing exchange of useful information on Facebook," said Claudie Benjamin, Public Affairs Specialist with VA New York Harbor Healthcare System, based in Manhattan.

Each facility's web presence has demonstrated that the web and social media are both extremely successful public affairs tools to communicate important VA health care information to Veterans, family members and the general public.

"People are looking for information about everything from movie reviews to news and on shopping, travel, and of course, healthcare," Ms. Benjamin said. VA has also made a special effort to reach women Veterans with these tools. "We have made a conscious decision to post photos, videos and articles about women with the goal of encouraging more women Vets to enroll for VA healthcare services. As a result, we have seen our female enrollments start to inch up."



Facebook in 3 easy steps

VISN 3 supports using Facebook as an effective way for Veterans to communicate directly with us. To do this, you need to join the Facebook network by starting an account with your email address.

If you do not have an email address, free email addresses are available from many networks, including Gmail and Yahoo.

Here's how to sign up for Facebook:

1. Go to <http://www.facebook.com/>

VANYHarbor It will prompt, "Not yet a member?"

2. Click on "Sign Up" at the top of the web page, fill in the required information, including your email address and a password so that you can access your Facebook account. Write down your password in a safe place so that you can log in often.

3. Log in and follow the easy-to-follow directions to get started. We look forward to seeing you on Facebook!

JAMES J. PETERS VA HOSTS VALENTINES FOR VETERANS 2011



The SUNY Maritime Color Guard presents the National Ensign.

What brings Miss New York, Miss Teen USA, a children's chorus, a State Senator, the NYPD Emerald Society Pipes and Drums and the SUNY Maritime Color Guard together? No, it's not a reality TV show; it was the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center.

The hospital recognized the 33rd Annual National Salute, a week-long celebration of special thanks that occurs during the week of Valentine's Day, with local celebrities, elected officials and school children to visit Veterans and to bring them some Valentine's Day cheer, like many VAMCs across the country. The visitors included Miss New York 2010 Claire Buffie, Miss Teen USA 2010 Kamie Crawford, the chorus of PS 83, Senator Jeffrey Klein, the NYPD Emerald Society Pipes and Drums and the SUNY Maritime Color Guard.

"The National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans gives everyone a chance to let our Veterans know just how very much they



NYPD Emerald Society Pipes and Drums tour the wards in the Medical Center.



Veteran Jim Mullarkey, Miss New York Claire Buffie, Veteran Harry Reid and Miss Teen USA Kamie Crawford.



Veteran Candido Matta enjoys a friendly chat with Miss New York, Claire Buffie.

are appreciated," said Medical Center Director MaryAnn Musumeci. "We're excited to welcome Miss Buffie, Ms. Crawford and Senator Klein. Their participation just heightens the celebration and brings a special note of cheer to our Veterans."

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

"Our medical center's 464 volunteers are an important part of our health care team and donate over 85,000 hours of their precious time to our Veterans. The National Salute program is a great way for people to learn more about helping the veterans we serve," Musumeci said. "Visitors are surprised at how varied our volunteer opportunities are."



Students of PS 83 deliver cards and gifts to Veteran George McGinnis.

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

HOT SUPER FOODS FOR THE COLD WINTER MONTHS

Written By: Makayla Crownhart, James L. Peters
VAMC Dietetic Intern 2009-2010

Chilly temperatures during the fall and winter months may lead one to believe that fresh, seasonal produce is not available. But there is actually a wide variety of seasonal fruits and vegetables, some of which are called super foods. Super foods are commonly mentioned in magazines, cookbooks, and news reports, but there are no scientific standards set to define a super food. All fruits and vegetables contain essential disease fighting nutrients but certain ones pack extremely high amounts in small quantities. Pomegranates, winter squash, and kale are available in the fall/winter season. They contain quantities of antioxidants, fiber, and essential vitamins and minerals that make them super foods. By utilizing winter's seasonal foods you can increase your fruit and vegetable intake during the chilly months.

SPICED POMEGRANATE APPLE CIDER

Recipe courtesy of CA Pomegranate Council

INGREDIENTS

6 cups apple cider

6 cloves

1 stick cinnamon, about 3 inches in length

1-1/2 cups pomegranate juice*

Heat apple cider, cloves, and cinnamon until juice just reaches a simmer; remove from heat.

Let steep, covered, one hour. Stir in pomegranate juice. For each serving, heat 3/4 cup juice mixture (do not boil).

Makes 8 servings

*One medium pomegranate (about 9 ounces) yields 1/2 cup juice.

POMEGRANATE

The pomegranate is a fruit that has been cultivated for centuries in countries ranging from Iran to northern India to Malaysia. The fruit has gained popularity in the United States and is grown in California and Arizona, producing fruit from September through December. Whole pomegranates can be stored in the refrigerator for up to three months! The red leather skin encloses compartments packed with sweet, juicy, pink pulp called aril. The aril is the edible portion of the fruit and is packed with nutrients. Not only do pomegranates have high amounts of Vitamin C, potassium and fiber, they provide many antioxidants. In fact, the pomegranate has three types of antioxidant polyphenols: tannins, anthocyanins, and ellagic acid which are predicted to play a vital role in cancer and heart disease prevention. Try adding this sweet, unique fruit and its juice to a dish this winter.





SUPPORT FOR OUR NEWEST VETERANS - IN PERSON AND ONLINE



By Geri DeDominicis, LCSW

We in VA are working hard to improve the way we share important information with America's newest generation of Veterans by employing the internet more than ever before.

Log onto the web to see how the VA is better serving women Veterans, helping families reunite with returning combat Vets, how to maximize treatments available for your visible and invisible wounds, unemployment and homelessness, and much more.

Here are eight tips to make a difference in your own transition into civilian life:

- 1) Use the web sites below to learn about signs and symptoms of conditions affecting Veterans nationwide.
- 2) Help family and friends understand what's going on by sharing information.
- 3) Ask your private providers to educate themselves on the issues you and other Veterans face.
- 4) Stay active. Consider joining a healthy social group specifically for Veterans – regain the sense of belonging/purpose that often accompanies military life.
- 5) Get screened for ailments/conditions that afflict OEF/OIF/OND combat Veterans at VA.
- 6) Learn about benefits you and your family may be eligible for, especially after leaving military service.
- 7) Seek help before you think you need it – just to be sure you are on the right track and maximizing your transition to civilian life.
- 8) Learn how to manage the money you received upon discharge to make the most gains over time.





Photo caption: James C. Rybicki navigates the websites to see what help is available with Betsy Valentine, Nurse Case Manager assisting him

The web sites are most helpful with the tips:

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/index.asp>

Provides signs/symptoms of PTSD; video and written information/concrete ideas on how to handle/cope with reunion after deployment; information on VA services/ treatment of PTSD; and guidance for women returning from combat.

<http://www.oefoif.va.gov/>

Provides information on benefits, claim policies, and news affecting Veterans.

<http://www.achillesinternational.org/programs/freedom-team/overview>

Describes the organization Achilles, designed to help disabled individuals participate in sports and athletics. VA Hudson Valley is collaborating with Achilles' group and Mount St Mary's College to form a chapter. A plan for this year is the initiation of a Kayaking group for Veterans. See VA OEF/OIF/OND staff at Hudson Valley to sign up! Also, see <http://www.adaptivesportsfoundation.org/>

For winter sports, see:

<http://www1.va.gov/opalspeceven/wsc/docs/wsc-factsheet.pdf>

<http://www.hudsonvalley.va.gov/freedom.asp>

VA Hudson Valley's web site for returning Veterans of OEF/OIF/OND. Our site provides useful links to organizations such as Wounded Warriors, VA programs, locations, a guide for families, calendar, and fact sheets.

<http://www.facebook.com/VAHudsonValley?ref=sgm>

Join our Facebook page for updates and local news regarding Veteran care. Posts include interesting topics and guides from our subject matter experts.

<http://www.mymoney.gov/>

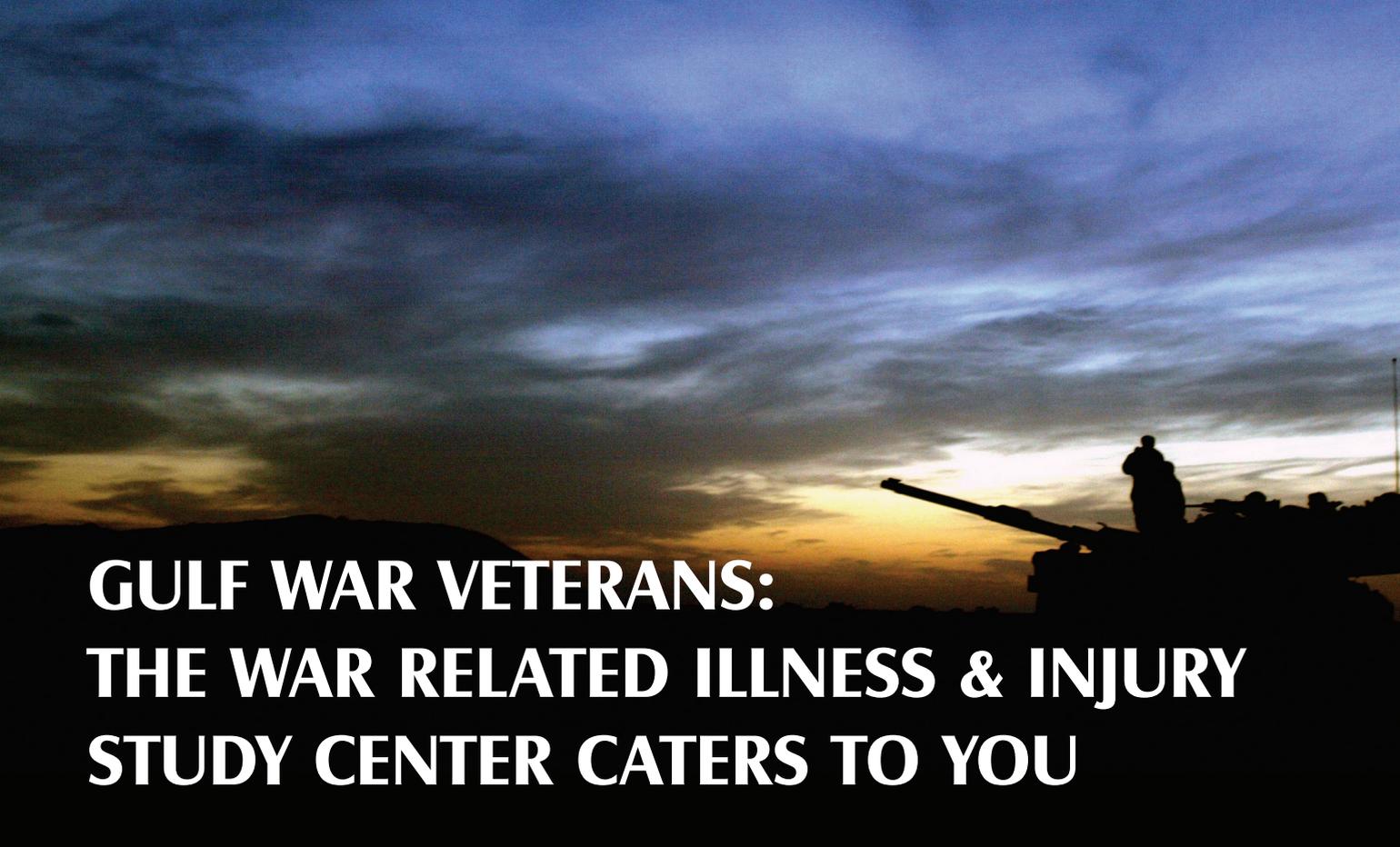
Provides a wealth of tools and information on money management including a section designed specifically for military and Veterans.

<http://www.aheconnect.com/citizensoldier/>

This site provides courses for community providers to understand military culture, combat-related PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injuries and issues facing women returning from combat.

<http://www.usajobs.com/>

The official US government site for federal job listings.



GULF WAR VETERANS: THE WAR RELATED ILLNESS & INJURY STUDY CENTER CATERS TO YOU

“I am an absolute firm believer that the WRIISC was instrumental in changing my life for the better. Through the knowledge about my own health and the suggestions for healthy coping skills I gained from the WRIISC team I have gone on to do things in life I never thought possible.”

—GW1 Veteran evaluated at the NJ WRIISC

Addressing the Past and Ensuring the Future

It has been 20 years since the first Gulf War began. In addition to continually thanking the brave men and women who served, VA must ensure that we address the health conditions, concerns, and the impact of deployment on the lives of Veterans. For the past decade, the War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC) at the East Orange Campus has been committed to improving the health of Gulf War 1 (GW1) Veterans through their post-deployment services.

Clinical Care

A number of GW1 Veterans who visit the WRIISC have multiple unexplained symptoms, diagnosed complex health problems, concerns about how exposures might have negatively impacted their health, psychological conditions, and social hardships. Though many have previously seen

VA providers and have had numerous work-ups for their symptoms, they are still struggling for answers to their questions. GW1 Veterans who visit the WRIISC receive a comprehensive clinical evaluation conducted over several days by a multidisciplinary team of specialists. At the end of the comprehensive clinical evaluations, Veterans have the opportunity to meet with the entire team of specialists to discuss findings and to receive an individualized plan or “road map” to assist them in addressing their health concerns. These plans usually combine the next steps to take for diagnosed conditions, including those which may have been discovered during evaluation, and recommendations to improve psychological or social health. The WRIISC has provided more than 300 of these specialized comprehensive evaluations to GW1 Veterans.

Addressing Exposure Concerns

Many GW1 Veterans have concerns that military exposures may have negatively impacted their current or future health. Over the years, the WRIISC staff has evaluated over 450 Gulf War Veterans with exposure concerns related to their service and in the majority of the cases, they have been able to address those health concerns. In other cases, they have recommended further steps to investigate the possible impact of an exposure on a Veteran’s health.

Research

While providing GW1 Veterans with clinical care is the primary job, focusing on what they still do not know and better methods of treatment are also critically important. WRIISC researchers and clinicians have worked closely together with the common goal of using research to improve clinical care for GW1 Veterans. Studies completed at the WRIISC focus on everything from physiological and behavioral studies to neuroimaging studies and health services research. Findings from these studies provide insight into the health of GW1 Veterans and created a foundation for future research studies. Circulating research findings within the VA and the wider scientific community is an essential part of improving care for Veterans. WRIISC staff members have published over 45 research papers related to the health of GW1 Veterans. In spite of these accomplishments, the need for research related to GW1 Veterans remains great. Currently, seven ongoing WRIISC studies relate to GW1 Veterans while four new proposals are planned.

The WRIISC mission is to address post-deployment health concerns and GW1 Veterans remain at the heart of this mission. Staff at the WRIISC welcomes the opportunity to have more GW1 Veterans referred to the center for comprehensive clinical evaluations, assistance with exposure concerns, and research study participation.



The screenshot shows the WRIISC website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links for Home, Veteran Services, Business, About VA, Media Room, Locations, and Contact Us. Below this is a main navigation menu with categories like CLINICAL SERVICES FOR VETERANS, HOW TO REFER A VETERAN, EXPOSURES & HEALTH CONDITIONS, and RESEARCH. A central banner features a photo of staff and the text: "WE PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR VA CLINICIANS. Learn how you can refer a Veteran to our program." Below the banner are sections for NEWS and ANNOUNCEMENTS with several article links. On the right side, there are contact details for CA, DC, and NJ WRIISC locations, including addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses.

Over the years, feedback about the WRIISC clinical evaluation from GW1 Veterans highlights satisfaction in:

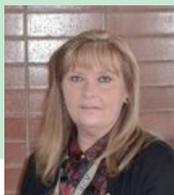
- the individualized assessment,
- attention received,
- meeting face to face with the entire clinical team “at the same time,” and especially,
- the opportunity to have time to ask questions and be heard.

The WRIISC was proud to acknowledge the service of GW1 Veterans on this 20th Anniversary of the Gulf War.



The Director of NJ WRIISC, Gudrun Lange, PhD, traveled to Dallas in August to attend the Gulf War Veterans Reunion and help commence the anniversary by giving a presentation on WRIISC services. She spoke of how Veterans can get the help they need and deserve from the program. According to Dr. Lange, “I was honored to go to this event to represent the WRIISC Program - to show our respect for those Veterans who served in the Gulf War and to demonstrate our commitment to continuously improve the health of Gulf War 1 Veterans nationwide through our efforts.”

NEW JUSTICE OUTREACH PROGRAM HELPS VETS IN TROUBLE WITH THE LAW



Denise Lukowski
LCSW, CASAC, VA's Veterans
Justice Outreach Coordinator
212-836-6600 x2457.

Denise Lukowski, LCSW, CASAC, is no stranger to entanglements that bring mental health issues and law enforcement together. A 20-year NYPD Police Officer and police counselor, now VA's Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator, she plays a key role in the Queens Veterans Treatment Court.

The innovative new program launched by the Queens District Attorney's Office, with the support of VA and many other government and non-profit agencies, offers an alternative to prison for Veterans who have pleaded guilty to felonies and less serious crimes. Veterans are not eligible if they have been charged with arson, murder or sex offenses.

"This program is based on an understanding that the men and women who have served their country in the military and have come into contact with the criminal justice system due to problems associated with transitioning out of the military and back to civilian life deserve every opportunity to enter treatment as opposed to incarceration," said Ms. Lukowski. "PTSD, TBI, substance abuse, homelessness, medical issues and unemployment are addressed through VA services."

Key players in the program are Veterans who serve as Court Mentors. These ex-service volunteers help program participants navigate the challenges of adhering to the program and keeping on track. The mentors work with the Veterans in meeting their individual goals.

"It's the Veteran first," said Court Mentor Coordinator Rich-

ard Lee, a Vietnam Air Force Veteran. "Advocacy is a full-time job. It doesn't matter what hat you wear. We help with whatever it takes to help the Veteran who has gone astray get back on track."

Ms. Lukowski explained that the VBA and VA work with the Veteran offenders to help them enroll for VA services needed to qualify for the program. The VBA also works with Veterans to upgrade their eligibility. In addition to self-referral, Veterans are referred to the program by VA providers and the Court. If approved for participation, a treatment plan is drawn up prioritizing the problems that must be addressed.

The plan also outlines the type of specialized support required to address needs, such as job training, substance abuse treatment or affordable housing. Offenders must commit to meeting regularly with court officials to ensure compliance with the plan.

"It's very intensive starting out," explained Ms. Lukowski, who has high hopes for the first two Veterans who were recently transferred from non-Veteran Courts into the program with an understanding that they deserved this chance to stay out of jail and get their lives back in order."The participants come to court once a week and then less often if they are progressing well."

Veterans interested in volunteering to be Court Mentors may call Denise Lukowski, 212-836-6600 x2457.

HELPING VETERANS GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Take one look at the newly opened Sleep Center at the New York Harbor Healthcare System's Brooklyn Campus and you might think you've wandered off hospital grounds.

The four-bed, state-of-the-art unit, newly refurbished and opened in late September, looks more like an upscale hotel or posh college dormitory than a hospital. And the views are priceless: The tranquil harbor, with ships anchored by the Verrazzano Narrows Bridge, on one side, and Dyker Beach Golf Course and tree tops of the Brooklyn neighborhood on the other. Both views make coming for sleep studies as comfortable for the Veteran as possible and, as accurate as possible.

VA diagnoses and treats a wide variety of sleep disorders including obstructive sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome, central sleep apnea syndromes, narcolepsy, as well as sleep problems associated with traumatic brain injury.

Having poor sleep quality is more than just feeling tired, cautions Shawn Knapik, M.D., Sleep Center Director. A lack of sleep can lead to other health problems, productivity problems at work, and accidents.

"Once sleep problems are diagnosed accurately, our main focus is on follow-up and treatment for patients so that we ensure they are getting better," said Dr. Knapik.

"Our model is comprehensive care."

The new laboratory provides advanced diagnostic sleep studies and therapies such as continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) and at-home sleep studies for sleep apnea testing.

Sleep apnea can be much more troubling than just snoring. "Obstructive sleep apnea is now recognized as an independent risk factor for heart disease, hypertension, and stroke, among other serious consequences," noted Mohammad Al-Ajam, M.D., a sleep medicine specialist and recent addition to the Brooklyn VA team.

Sleep apnea is one of the leading causes of excessive daytime sleepiness, which often goes undiagnosed. Most people who have sleep apnea don't know they have it because it only occurs during sleep.

The results of poor sleep quality can leave the patient feeling un-refreshed after sleep and tired during the day. Doctors can readily suspect the condition during routine office visits and, when combined with sleep testing, the diagnosis can be proven.

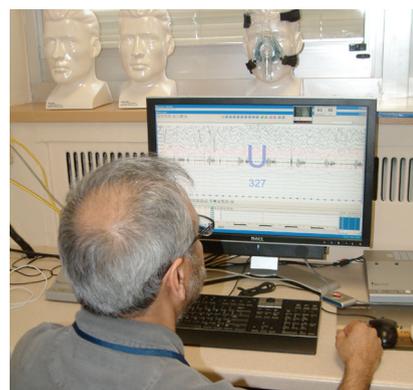
"The patient's quality of life can improve so much from an effective treatment plan," said Michael Cutaia, M.D., Chief of Pulmonary & Critical Care Medicine at the Brooklyn Campus.

"Obstructive sleep apnea is now recognized as an independent risk factor for heart disease, hypertension, and stroke among other serious consequences."

- Mohammad Al-Ajam, M.D., Sleep Medicine Specialist, Brooklyn VA



A bedroom at the Sleep Center at the Brooklyn VA.



A Technician monitors the sleep of a Veteran patient.



The entrance of the new Sleep Center at VA New York Harbor Healthcare System, Brooklyn Campus



ADAPTIVE SPORTS CLINIC INSTRUCTS, MOTIVATES & FREES VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES

The Northport VA Medical Center hosted the first ever New York/New Jersey Veterans Healthcare Network Adaptive Sports Clinic late last year. Disabled Veterans from the New York and New Jersey areas participated in wheelchair basketball and soccer, tandem biking and goal ball for the blind, sit cycling, golf, and Adaptive Archery. There were also other adaptive sports demonstrations.

“VA clinics like these allow Veterans with disabilities to participate and succeed in ways they no longer thought were possible,” said Northport VA Medical Center Director Phillip Moschitta. “Adaptive Sports have the ability

to motivate and instill confidence that extends well beyond the playing field.”

Northport VAMC also participated in the New England Disabled Sports Program’s Ski and Ride Development Camp at Loon Mountain, New Hampshire, in February. The camp offered a full weekend of instruction, lodging, and ski passes to disabled veterans.

Twenty-three-year-old OEF/OIF Marine Corps Veteran Tremain Wade, accompanied by Northport VAMC Blind Rehabilitation Specialist and Adaptive Sports Program Coordinator Ed Richards, LCSW, participated in this amazing winter weekend adventure.

Wade had never skied in a “bucket ski,” so balancing and steering one became the focus of his lessons. These lessons were provided by U.S. Army Colonel Tim Watson and camp team member Cathal McGloin. According to his trainers, Tremain’s “can do” attitude allowed him to very successfully ski Loon Mountain, top to bottom!

Given the success of the first clinic, Northport VAMC followed up with a second adaptive sports clinic on June 16, which was also sponsored by the Disabled American Veterans Transportation Network, the United States Olympic Committee/Paralympic Division, and the NY/NJ Veterans Healthcare Network.

Caption: VA employees experienced the challenges that face our disabled veterans by participating in the NY/NJ Veterans Healthcare Network Adaptive Sports Clinic at Northport VAMC.

IT'S NOT EASY, BUT YOU CAN QUIT

You've heard it before: Smoking shortens your life. On average, smokers die 13 to 15 years earlier than non-smokers.

Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body and increases your risk of lung disease, heart disease, stroke, cancer, and other serious conditions and what's more, the harmful effects of smoking don't end with you. Nearly 50,000 Americans die each year as a result of breathing other people's smoke. When you quit, the people around you, especially children, will be healthier.

Along with the many health benefits to you and your loved ones, there are also financial reasons to quit smoking. You can save thousands of dollars a year by not buying cigarettes, missing fewer days of work due to illness, and paying less for insurance.

No matter how old you are or how long you have been smoking, quitting can dramatically improve your health. It is never too late to quit. In fact, older smokers are more likely to be successful than younger smokers. If you have tried quitting before, try again.

It's hard work, but more than three million Americans successfully quit smoking every year. Ask your VA provider to refer you to Northport's Smoking Cessation Program and let's get you to quit for good!

HELP US TO SERVE YOU BETTER

If you have questions or concerns about your health or your VA care or if you have suggestions for how we can improve, please let us know. By sharing your thoughts, you give your VA providers and unit and clinic managers opportunities to better assist you and improve the care and treatment of all veterans.

Here are some other helpful tips to maximize your health and safety:

- When you get a prescription, make sure you know what it is for and what the side effects might be.
- Make sure your doctor knows what allergies or problems you have had with medicines.
- If you have a test, ask about the results. If they don't seem right, speak to your doctor about them.
- Make sure your doctor knows about all the medica-



tions you take. This includes prescriptions, medications you bought at a store, and over-the-counter items like vitamins and herbs.

- Write down questions for your doctor before your visit and think about bringing a friend or family member with you to your appointments.
- If you're being discharged from an inpatient stay, make sure you know what you need to do to keep your care plan active and never leave without contact information for one or more of your caregivers in case you have questions when you get home.

HAVE A MILITARY SERVICE-RELATED INJURY OR CONDITION?

If you have an injury or disease that happened while you were on active duty, or one that was made worse by active military service, you could be eligible for tax-free disability compensation. The amount paid ranges, depending on how disabled you are.

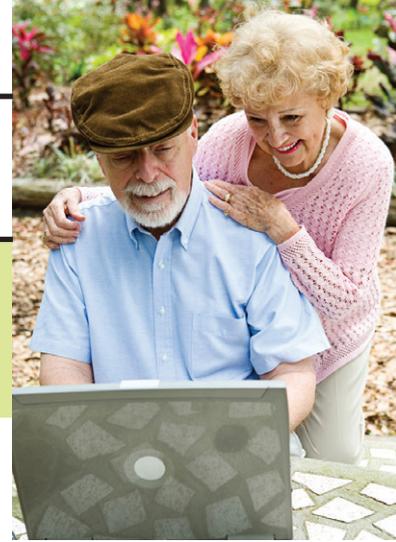
HOW CAN YOU APPLY?

Trained veteran counselors at the following locations can assist you in filing a claim with VA for disability compensation.

- Call for an appointment, Monday through Friday:
- Nassau Veterans Service Agency: 516-572-8450
- Suffolk Veterans Service Agency: 631-853-8387
- NYS Division of Veterans Affairs: 631-266-6702

The Disabled American Veterans also provide claims assistance at Northport VA Medical Center (building 9) on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings. You can also apply online through VA's web site at <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp>.

MANAGE YOUR HEALTH WITH THE INTERNET



MyHealthVet, Home Telehealth: A Spectrum of Services Available 24/7

We utilize the Internet for work, play and information, but did you know that your computer can also help you to manage your health? The VA has developed an array of tools and services which are designed to assist Veterans in the home, in the community, and on the go.

MyHealthVet

MyHealthVet is a web-based gateway, available to all Veterans independent of geographic location. It provides one-stop, online access 24/7 and Veterans may use it to find authoritative health information, better manage overall health, make informed health decisions, and record and store important health and military history information.

New, exciting features include:

Secure Messaging is web-based and enables you to send and receive messages from your health provider. Based on proven and widely accepted standards in the health care industry, Secure Messaging is not e-mail, but encrypted, secure communication meant for non-urgent communication.



What are the benefits? A safe, alternative means of communication that is convenient, flexible and saves time; reduces the need for telephone calls and waiting on hold; and it may enable you to reduce your visits to the clinic.

As this system is being phased in through 2011-12, we encourage you to speak to your VA provider to find out if YOUR VA healthcare team is an active Secure Messaging participant.



Home Telehealth

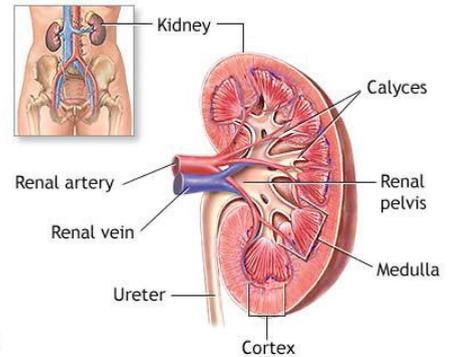
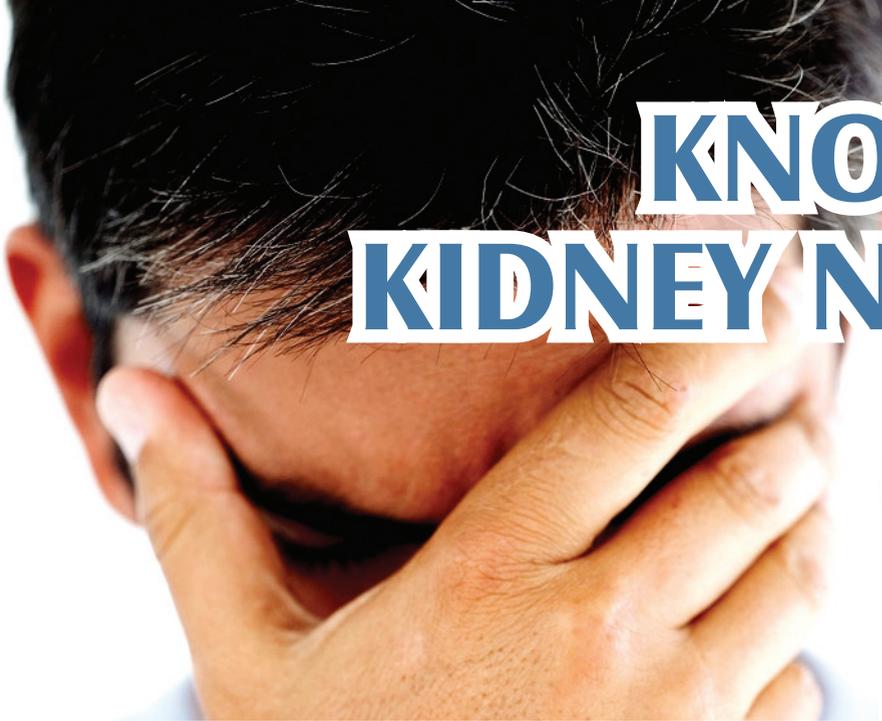
Home Telehealth is the use of health technologies to enhance and extend care. It also includes case management to facilitate your access to care and improve your health with devices that connect you from your home to your provider in the hospital. The goal is simple: Provide the right care in the right place at the right time. If you have a chronic health condition such as diabetes or chronic heart failure (CHF), please contact your facility's Home Telehealth Coordinator to find out if Telehealth is right for you:

- St. Albans Community Living Center: Simon Minu, MSN, 718-526-1000 x2438
- JJ Peters VAMC, Bronx: Ms. Rosemary Cancel-Santiago, 718-584-9000 x:6659
- VA Hudson Valley Health Care System: Linda Spadaro, NP, 845-831-2000, x4650
- Northport VA Medical Center: Louise Burns, NP, 631-261-4400 ext. 2971
- VA New Jersey Health Care System: Marsha Smith, MSN, 973-715-1707

Getting access to MyHealthVet involves three steps:

- 1) Register on the MyHealthVet site at www.myhealth.va.gov. Be sure to check off the box that says "VA Patient"
- 2) Watch the video or read the transcript of the video <<http://www.ehealth.va.gov/EHEALTH/media.asp>> before coming to the VA.
- 3) Visit your local VA facility or clinic to be in-person authenticated (IPA). You will need to present your Veterans Identification Card (VIC) or other government ID. For additional information, contact your local My HealthVet Coordinator:
 - VA NY Harbor Healthcare System: Denise Horton, 212-686-7500 ext. 7687
 - JJ Peters VA Medical Center: Kimberly Gibbs, 718-584-9000 ext. 6685
 - VA New Jersey Health Care System: Kirsten Labion, 973-676-1000 ext. 1-5387 or ext. 1-4412
 - VA Hudson Valley Health Care System: Mike Kelly, 845-831-2000 ext. 5356
 - Northport VA Medical Center: Valerie Drautz, 631-261-4400 ext. 5358

KNOW YOUR KIDNEY NUMBERS



You cannot live without your kidneys. Yet few people think about their kidneys and health. Most people know to ask about their blood pressure and cholesterol numbers, but do not know what information is necessary to tell them if they are developing a kidney problem.

The kidneys are two of the most important organs in the body. Their functions are to remove waste from the body. They remove excess water in the body, remove, regulate and recycle a vast number of chemicals from acids to electrolytes to hormones like the one that regulates calcium and medications. In addition, they manufacture the substance that turn on the bone marrow to make red blood cells and changes vitamin D, aiding in getting calcium into the bones. They even help to regulate blood pressure.

Interestingly, the numbers we have talked about in the past - blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol - are very important to the kidneys. High blood pressure and cholesterol damage the kidneys by blocking and destroying the delicate blood vessels that form the screening mechanism. This slow, steady process is hard to tell since the symptoms of kidney disease are only noticeable when the kidneys are about 10 to 15 percent functional. The telltale signs are feeling tired, loss of appetite, nausea, trouble concentrating, and swelling of the feet, hands and face. The damage

is irreversible and dialysis or kidney transplant are the only two options for treatment.

One of the earliest signs of kidney damage may be found in the urine. To detect early warning signs of kidney damage, your doctor will monitor your kidney function. This is done by testing both your blood and urine. The blood test is referred to as BUN and CREATININE as well as checking sodium and potassium. The BUN is a measurement of the nitrogen waste formed by the breakdown of the foods. Normally, it should be in 7 to 20mg range for every 100 ml of blood. Higher levels suggest kidney damage, dehydration or heart failure. The CREATININE is the waste product of muscles. This waste is normally gotten rid of by the kidneys, and a blood level higher than 0.6 mg to 1.2mg per 100 ml is generally suggestive of kidney disease.

The kidney recycles proteins in the body. Proteins should not be in the urine. The urine strips generally pick up only the larger proteins which are seen late in kidney damage. A test designed to pick up the small albumin proteins must be used to catch the early damage. This test is ordered on people at risk, like those living with diabetes. Finding albumin in the urine is the point where you can make changes that save your kidneys. If you have albumin in your urine and your blood pressure is

not below 130/80, you should make every effort to do so: Stop smoking, control your blood sugar to keep your Hemoglobin 1ac (Hb1ac) around 7 percent. Remember, it's a measure of diabetes control. You should avoid pain medications such as Aspirin (greater than 81mg for heart protection), Motrin/Ibuprofen, Aleve/ Naproxen and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) and other medications your doctor can tell you about. Your doctor will also adjust other medications you take to prevent further damage.

Diabetes is increasing at an alarming rate in America, and is the leading cause of kidney disease, according to the American Diabetes Association. It's increasing by 30 percent per year and is the ninth leading cause of death in the country. Know your numbers and take action - don't be part of the statistic.



Wavell Hodge, MD, Geriatrics and Extended Care Line Manager

WHERE YOU CAN FIND US – ANYTIME



VA HUDSON VALLEY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

MEDICAL CENTERS

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

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

COMMUNITY CLINICS

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

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

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

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

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

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

Poughkeepsie
Freedom Executive Park
488 Freedom Plains Road
Suite 120
Poughkeepsie
New York 12603
845 452-5151



VA JAMES J. PETERS MEDICAL CENTER

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

COMMUNITY CLINICS

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

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

Queens (current)
41-03 Queens Blvd.
Sunnyside, NY 11104
(718) 741-4800

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



VA NORTHPORT (LONG ISLAND) MEDICAL CENTER

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

COMMUNITY CLINICS

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

Riverhead
300 Center Drive,
Griffing Building
Riverhead, NY 11901
(631) 722-4950

East Meadow
2201 Hempstead
Turnpike, Building "Q"
East Meadow, NY 11554
(516) 282-0670



VA NEW JERSEY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM MEDICAL CENTERS

MEDICAL CENTERS

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

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

COMMUNITY CLINICS

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

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

**Hamilton University Off.
Plaza 1**
3635 Quakerbridge Road
Hamilton, NJ 08619
(609) 570-6600

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

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

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

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

Newark
20 Washington Place
Newark, NJ 07102
(973)-645-1441

Paterson

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

Patterson Army Health Clinic
Stephenson Avenue
Building 1075
Fort Monmouth, NJ 07703
(732)-532-4500



VA NEW YORK HARBOR HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

MEDICAL CENTERS

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

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

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

COMMUNITY CLINICS

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

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

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