



On The Beat

Minneapolis VA Health Care System
August/September 2011

Mission:

Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional healthcare that improves their health and well being.

Vision:

To be a patient-centered, integrated health care organization for Veterans providing excellent health care, research and education; an organization where people choose to work; an active community partner and a back up for national emergencies.

VA Core Values:

- Integrity
- Commitment
- Advocacy
- Respect
- Excellence

Inside this issue:

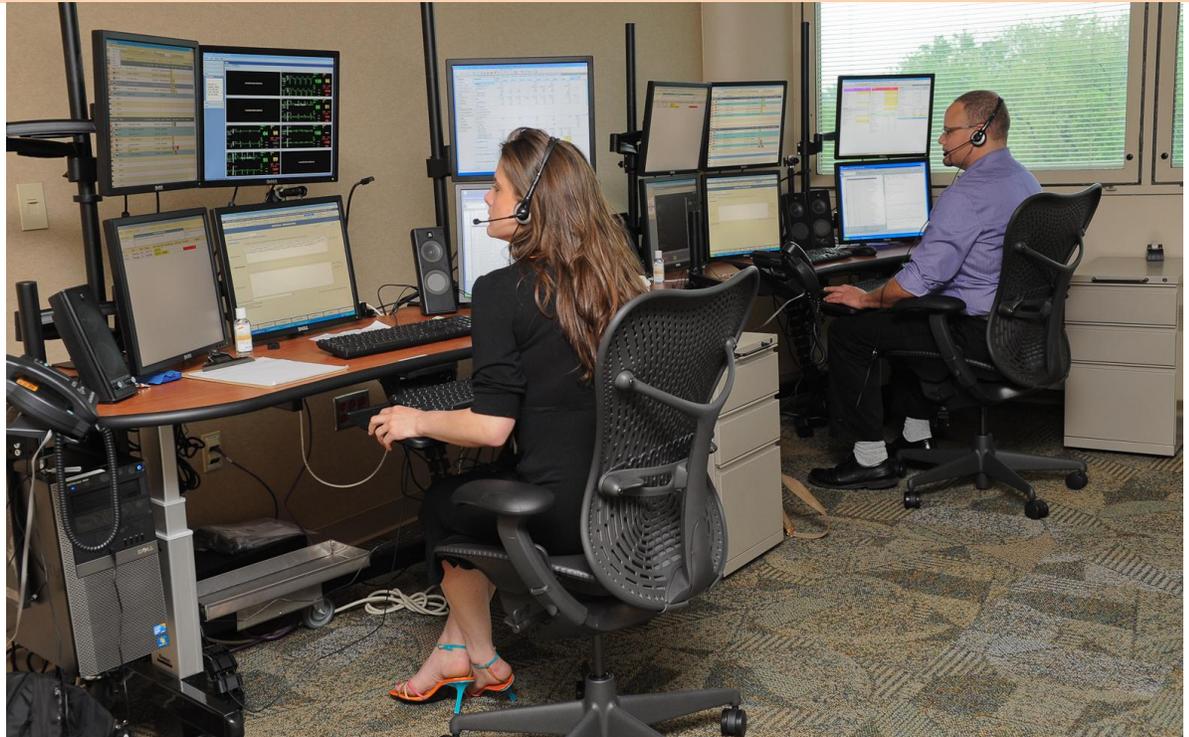
- VA Secy Visit – 3
- Ride2Recovery – 4
- Flu Vaccine – 5
- VA Newsmakers - 5
- Career Awards – 7
- VACO News - 8
- Social Media – 9
- Paint-a-Thon - 10

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor: Ralph Heussner
Public Affairs Officer

Writer – Rachel Walters
Administrative Fellow

Photographer: April Eilers
Medical Media



Tele-ICU Serves VAs in Upper Midwest

A “second set of eyes” can now monitor patients at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals across the VA Midwest Health Care Network, thanks to a Tele-Intensive Care Unit (Tele-ICU) that opened on August 2 at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

The integrated, Minneapolis-based team of critical care nurses and intensivists (doctors who specialize in critical care medicine) is now available 24/7 to aid patients and clinicians at VA hospitals in Fargo, ND, and Omaha, NE. VA hospitals in Iowa City, IA, Des Moines, IA, Black Hills, SD, and Sioux Falls, SD, will be added to the monitoring system within the next few months. When the system is complete, 75 ICU beds will be monitored from Minneapolis.

The opening of this Regional Tele-ICU Center is the first for VA and the first Minnesota-centered tele-ICU program.

“Our job is to collaborate with the bedside team,” said Dr. Robert Bonello, medical director of the program. “This high-tech service greatly improves Veterans’ access to highly skilled intensivists by placing them in the patients’ rooms via audio and visual telecommunications

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Sen. Franken Visits VA Booth at MN State Fair

VA staff members Jill Oliveri (l) and Debbie Schmidt received a surprise visit from U.S. Senator Al Franken on Aug. 31. The VA booth had more than 1,000 visitors during the 12-day event.

TELE-ICU TO MONITOR 75 BEDS IN VISN 23

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

software. We aren't replacing bedside clinicians or bedside care. Instead, we provide an added layer of support in managing a high risk patient population." The Tele-ICU, located in a quiet and restricted area on the fourth floor of the hospital, is equipped with a bank of monitoring screens that show vital signs (heart rate and blood pressure) and lab values. There is a live two-way audio-video feed. The video resolution is so high, intensivists can see a patient's pupils constrict in response to light.



Photo of patient in remote ICU as it appears on monitor in Minneapolis "hub."

With several large monitors showing data and the patient simultaneously, clinicians have all of the clinical data immediately at hand during a time-critical consultation.

"The bottom line – we can now provide Veterans with the best care possible, using the latest technologies combined with the best skills of experienced doctors and nurses," said Dr. Bonello. A study published by University of Massachusetts researchers in the May 16 issue of *Journal of American Medical Association* showed that tele-ICU improved care delivery and resulted in lower hospital and ICU mortality and shorter hospital and ICU lengths of stay.

STOPS AT SPINAL CORD INJURY CENTER, TELE-ICU AND 4J

VA Secretary Visits Minneapolis VAMC



It was a relatively short but productive visit to the Minneapolis VA Medical Center by VA Secretary Eric Shinseki on August 31. After delivering remarks at the American Legion National Convention and holding a press conference in Minneapolis mid-morning, he visited the VA Regional Office in the Whipple Federal Building before arriving at VAMC. The first stop at VAMC was a tour of the Spinal Cord Injury Center, led by Dr. Gary Goldish (photo upper left, who explains the functioning of the therapy pool). Next was a working lunch where VAMC administrative and research leaders provided background briefings on the work at the medical center. The Secretary visited the new tele-ICU on 4L where Dr. Robert Bonello demonstrated the new technology with a hookup to a satellite ICU (photo upper right). Finally, the Secretary had a chance to meet veterans on 4J (lower left photo) and staff; nurse manager Nina Pagel welcomes Secretary (lower right photo).



Ride to Recovery - Minneapolis VAMC was the site of the start of a 5-day, 275-mile bike trek across southern Minnesota August 23. The group Ride2Recovery sponsors similar events across the country to help Veterans; it plans another event here in 2012. A number of Minneapolis VA patients and their providers turned out to support the riders. U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar and VAMC director Steven Kleinglass gave brief remarks to encourage the riders to stay safe on their journey. The ride was held in conjunction with the American Legion National Convention in Minneapolis.



American Legion Briefed on Brain Sciences – Members of the National Rehabilitation Commission visited the medical center Aug. 30 and were addressed by Dr. Apostolos Georgopoulos, medical director of the Brain Sciences Center, which was established in the 1990s with Legion support.

WALK IN CLINIC OCTOBER 17-21

Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Has Arrived!

The 2011-2012 inactivated influenza vaccine contains H1N1, H3N2 and Brisbane strains. (We also have a very small amount of High Dose vaccine to be used by provider order only for appropriate Veterans 65 or older).



The Clinical Reminder has been turned on and the CPRS template has been updated. Inpatient pharmacy has the vaccine and supplies needed to give the shots in both the inpatient and outpatient settings.

The walk in Flu Shot Clinic for the Medical Center will be October 17-21 to coincide with "Infection – Don't Pass It On" week. Letters will be going out to all enrolled Veterans with the dates and times of the walk in Flu Shot clinic at Minneapolis and at the Community Based Outpatient Clinics.

Flu shots are also available for all employees through Occupational Health (OH) nurses and designated staff nurses on the wards and in the clinics. Forms are available through OH and should be returned to OH when completed.

Minneapolis VA Staff Newsmakers

- Results of a national study showing that an antibiotic reduces lung disease symptoms in patients with COPD appeared in the August 25 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. **Dennis Niewoehner, MD**, pulmonologist, was one of the investigators.
- **Dr. Charles Peterson**, staff psychologist, is winner of the "2011 Dieperink Prize" awarded by the Minnesota Psychoanalytic Society for psychoanalytic writing and scholarship in honor of Dr. Willem Dieperink. His paper, *Short-Term Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy: A Construction Zone*, appears in the September issue of the *American Journal of Psychotherapy*.
- Nurse case managers can improve the percentage of patients with diabetes who achieve control of hypertension, hyperglycemia and hyperlipidemia, according to a study published in the August issue of *Diabetes Care*, by **Areef Ishani, MD**, of the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs Health Care System, and colleagues.
- **Joan Griffin, PhD**, of the Center for Chronic Disease Outcomes Research, is lead author of "The Invisible Side of War: Families Caring for US Service Members with Traumatic Brain Injuries and Polytrauma," which appears in the September issue of the *Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation*.
- **Scott Sponheim, PhD**, appeared on the "Minnesota Military Hour" radio program on Fox News Radio (1130 AM) on Aug. 21. He discussed the Million Veteran Program, a research study on the role of human genes on disease.

VIRTUAL LIFETIME ELECTRONIC RECORD

MVAHCS Launches Electronic Record Exchange

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it is expanding the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) health pilot program to include veterans in Northeast Minnesota and Northwest Wisconsin.

VLER is a multi-faceted business and technology initiative that includes a portfolio of health, benefits, personnel, and administrative information sharing capabilities.

An estimated 5,000 Veterans who receive primary care services at the VA's Twin Ports Outpatient Clinic (TPOC) in Superior, WI, began receiving notification letters this week that they are eligible to participate in the VLER program, which allows the sharing of health information between the VA, Department of Defense and non-governmental health agencies who agree to partner with the VA.

The Minneapolis VA Health Care System (MVHCS), which operates the Twin Ports clinic, is partnering with Essentia Health (formerly known as St. Mary's/Duluth Clinic Health System), a private hospital, which provides space for the VA Twin Ports clinic in its building. Many VA patients also receive services at Essentia Health.

"We are committed to offering new technologies that enhance our abilities to provide the Veterans in Minnesota and Western Wisconsin with high quality health care and services," said MVAHCS Director Steve Kleinglass.

VA selected the Minnesota and Northwestern Wisconsin area because of the high concentration of Veterans, military retirees, and members of the National Guard and Reserve. Veterans who choose to participate will authorize their public and private sector health care providers and doctors to share specific health information electronically, safely, securely, and privately. No exchange of information will occur without the appropriate permissions of the individual Veterans. More detailed information on the pilot program is available by calling 1-877-771-VLER (8537), or visit website at www.minneapolis.va.gov/vler.asp



Who will educate Veterans about VLER Health? Julie Frankhouser is the VLER Community Coordinator for MVAHCS. She is a seasoned project manager with 24 years of experience. Julie brings prior VA exposure, as well as a passion for Veterans, to this position. She began volunteering at the Cheyenne VAMC when she was 14 years old, and both of her grandfathers were World War I and World War II Veterans. She was an active participant in Civil Air Patrol and ROTC. Julie can be reached by email at julie.frankhouser@va.gov, or by phone at 612-467-3981.

Minneapolis VA Calendar

September 30 – Dedication of Sports Court & Pavilion (10 a.m.)

October 12 – Country Store at the Medical Center; proceeds support our volunteers

November 11 – Dedication of Ramsey CBOC (1 p.m.)

Career Awards - Congratulations!

40 Years

Lynwood Franciso, Facilities
William C. Duane Jr, Primary Care
Kristin R. Palfe, Mental Health
Duane R. Croissen, Facilities

35 Years

Dixie L. Hilton, Specialty Care
Karen L. Schlies, Specialty Care
Carol J. Ward, Specialty Care
Debra S Dingmann, Mental Health
James R Wolf, Biomed

30 Years

Mary Ann C. Kolosky, Twin Ports Clinic
Debra A. Pederson, Education
Michael L. Zak, Pharmacy
Patricia A. Scepaniak, Office of Director
David D. Rabb, EEO
Lori A Huffman, VISN 23
Peter A Yakowicz, VISN 23
John C Ofstehage, Specialty Care
Lucious Washington, Primary Care
Willie C Branch, Nut & Food
Mark A Betzold, Nut & Food
Bernard Beamon, Vet Center

25 Years

Susan J. McDaniel, Business
Annette L. Townsend, Business
William J. Horstman, Pharmacy
Brenda M. Ellingson, Specialty Care
Mona L. Olson, Specialty Care
Cheryl L. White, Specialty Care
Teresa M. Nelsen, VISN 23
David E Bentson, Facilities
Carlos J Rezeszutek, Specialty Care
Terry J Christle, Primary Care
Cindy L. Garten, Path & Lab
Gloria E Niehans, Path & Lab
Michael R Gonsowski, Business Office

20 Years

Catherine B. Proebstle, Primary Care
Theresa C. Huber, Primary Care
David J. Griffin, Primary Care

20 Years (continued)

Joseph Medvec, Prosthetics
Jeraldine L. Young, Business
Cassandra Miller-Hardwick, EC&R
Jeanne E Ebel, EC&R
Ruth M Hildreth, Regional Counsel
Tammy S Haggard, Specialty Care
Joane K Anderson, Specialty Care
Gail M Pueringer, Primary Care
David R Willetts, Primary Care
Elton J Johnson, EMS

15 Years

Craig S. Smith, Business
Alesia Wricks, Nursing Service
Sandra R. Anderson, Mental Health
Danita R. Erickson, Nurse Manager
Julie T Quinn, Voluntary Services
Ann M Wagner, Mental Health
Kimberly K Bares, Mental Health
Gregory A Wasburn, IT VISN 23
Michelle D Anderson, ECR
Andrew Chavers, EMS
Fred C Holland, EMS
Rhonda K Biosvert, Voluntary Services
John P Zimmerman, Specialty Care
James R Johnson, Primary Care

10 Years

Deborah A. Kedrowski, Research
Joan M. Wickstrom, Extended Care & Rehab
Ellen H. Lafans, Specialty Care
Deborah J. Johnson, Specialty Care
Julia L. Ehasz, Specialty Care
Kovatec D. McPipe, Nursing Service
Trudy Timmer, Primary Care
Christena A James, Primary Care
Thomas Ell, Primary Care
Richard M Sergey, Specialty Care
Joan M Griffin, Research
Matthew J McCoy, VISN 23
Terhas G Abay, EMS
Arthur C. Howard, EEO

NEWS FROM VA CENTRAL OFFICE

VA Begins New Program to Serve Veterans Living Abroad

VA has instituted a new program to provide comprehensive compensation and pension (C&P) examinations to U.S. Veterans living overseas. In June, VA staff traveled to Camp Lester in Okinawa, Japan, to join with members of the Department of Defense in providing C&P exams to Veterans. Over the course of their three week trip, the team completed 247 examinations on 39 Veterans. Due to the success of the pilot program, a return visit is planned for Sept. 19-30.



Telephone Service Helps Family Members Encourage Veterans to Seek Care

VA has launched a telephone service, Coaching into Care, to provide assistance to family members and friends trying to encourage their Veteran to seek health care for possible readjustment and mental health issues. To help Veterans address problems and support Veterans in making decisions about getting care, the Coaching into Care program offers unlimited, free coaching with family members or friends over a series of telephone calls. Callers receive professional coaching on solving specific logistical obstacles and encouraging sometimes reluctant Veterans to seek care while still respecting the Veteran's right to make personal decisions. Callers can reach VA's Coaching into Care program at the toll-free number 1-888-823-7458, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m., Mondays through Fridays, and online at <http://www.mirecc.va.gov/coaching/>. As always, Veterans can reach immediate help at the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255, press 1 for Veterans.

VA Posts Online List of Ships Associated with Presumptive Agent Orange Exposure

Veterans who served aboard U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships operating on the waters of Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, may be eligible to receive Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation for 14 medical conditions associated with presumptive exposure to Agent Orange. An updated list of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships confirmed to have operated on Vietnam's inland waterways, docked on shore, or had crewmembers sent ashore, is posted at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/ to assist Vietnam Veterans in determining potential eligibility for compensation benefits.

VA Research Program Wins Approval from Accrediting Body

VA Human Research Protection Program (HRPP), which helps ensure high ethical and scientific standards for multi-site research projects involving Veterans or their health information, has been accredited by the nonprofit Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP). A key component of the HRPP is the Department of Veterans Affairs Central Institutional Review Board (IRB), launched in 2008 by VA's Office of Research and Development. VA's Central IRB oversees large clinical trials and other human research projects conducted at multiple VA medical centers and often involving hundreds or even thousands of Veterans. More than 100 VA sites have approval to conduct human research projects, and often collaborate on projects. VA's Central IRB is able to ensure that local issues also are addressed.

BE AWARE OF SENSITIVE DATA

Protecting Information on Social Media

Did you know that the VA organization is currently conversing with more than 100,000 people via social media sites like Facebook and Twitter? Social media allows people to quickly and easily share information via text, audio, video and other multimedia on the



Internet. While you are welcome to “join the conversation” on these social media sites, it is important that you maintain your boundaries to prevent the disclosure of VA data. Being wary of security and privacy threats will not only protect Veterans’ sensitive information, but also your own.

You are a Veteran Information Protector (VIP) on social media sites. As a VA employee, you must be mindful of what information is sensitive, how you portray yourself, and what VA and Veteran data should be kept confidential. Information that is put out on the Internet reaches a very wide audience and stays there for a very long time. Protecting the privacy of Veterans’ sensitive data is essential to maintaining the trust of our Veterans.

Follow these tips while using social media sites to avoid a sticky situation for VA, Veterans, and for you:

- **Control personal information** – Select restricted privacy settings so people cannot see personal information like your birthday, birthplace, and phone number. Do not disclose any health information or Veteran data on social media sites. Identity thieves search for this information and can use it to their advantage.
- **Think twice before you post** – Will the status update, photo or comment that you are about to post reveal Veterans’ personally identifiable information (PII) or protected health information (PHI)? Never post any information about Veterans that you are assisting, even if you think it is harmless.
- **Pause before you click** – Criminals often post phony links that claim to show you who has been looking at your profile, or make exciting posts with subjects about funny videos. Clicking on these links could download viruses and other malware to your computer. Being wary of things that sound odd or look unusual will help you prevent sensitive data from being disclosed.
- **Learn more from your Information Security Officer (ISO) and Privacy Officer (PO)** - If you have questions or concerns about using social media, reach out to your ISO or PO; if you don’t know who your ISO or PO is, you can find out by accessing the [ISO/PO Locator](#).
- For more tips on staying secure while using social media, download the *Social Media fact sheet*. To find links to all VA organizations currently using Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, and blogs, check out the [VA Social Media Directory](#). You can also send your questions or comments to IS.Communications@va.gov.

When it comes to protecting Veterans’ Information, we are all VIPs!

Robert V Baller – Information Security Officer X 4490

Linda Duda – Information Security Officer X 1113

Robert (Dan) Rude – Information Security Officer X 7627

Paint-a-Thon Tradition Continues

More than 40 VA staff and their family members spent Saturday Aug 6 at a Minneapolis home. A WCCO-TV photographer just happened to be passing by; a story appeared on the evening news.

