



On The Beat

Minneapolis VA Health Care System
May/June 2012

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.

VA Core Values:

- Integrity
- Commitment
- Advocacy
- Respect
- Excellence

Inside this issue:

- Kidney Disease Study – 2
- Eurasian Visitors – 3
- VA2K – 4
- MH Staffing Increase – 5
- Commuter Profiles – 5
- Health Fair – 6
- Cancer Survivors Day - 7
- Nurses Awards - 8
- Milestones – 9
- Twins Visit – 10

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Minneapolis



Catching waves— Dr. Scott Sponheim (at computer) inspects EEG recordings of brain waves from Veteran Andrew Lisdahl. Lab assistant Peter Lynn monitors electrode placement. PHOTO BY APRIL EILERS

VA Brain Studies Sort Out Physical And Emotional Scars of War

Many Veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have returned home with a dual diagnosis - mild traumatic brain injury (TBI) and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Problems such as lack of energy, trouble sleeping and irritability occur in both conditions. In fact, the interplay between the two is highly complex; TBI damage to certain areas of the brain, for instance, could result in symptoms identical to those typical of PTSD, or affect a Veteran's ability to recover from emotional stress.

Sorting out which symptoms stem from TBI versus PTSD could aid treatment. Psychotherapy indicated for PTSD might not work as well when TBI is also present. Drug indications might change depending on the mix of symptoms.

Pinpointing the precise effects of TBI and PTSD on brain structure and function has thus become an important goal for researchers in VA and the Department of Defense. One such effort is under way at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. A team led by

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

MINNEAPOLIS VA STUDIES DUAL DIAGNOSIS OF TBI/PTSD

Continued from Page 1

Scott Sponheim, PhD, is working with up to 180 Minnesota National Guard troops who have come home from Iraq with mild TBI, PTSD, both conditions, or neither. The four-year study is looking at both brain structure and function, using neuropsychological tests plus two types of brain scans.

In the EEG (electroencephalography) phase of the study, participants wear a thin red nylon cap with dozens of electrodes attached, as they sit in a resting state or perform tasks involving attention, memory, and processing of visual or verbal information.

The researchers hope to be able to document key differences in the signals given off by TBI- versus PTSD-affected brains. For example, if their early data hold up, the investigators believe EEGs will consistently show less activity in the frontal lobes during memory tasks in those Veterans who have TBI, compared with those who have PTSD but no TBI.

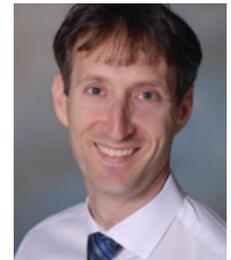
To measure differences in brain structure, the researchers are using a form of MRI called diffusion tensor imaging. It shows abnormalities in the brain's white matter, the pinkish, fatty tissue whose glial cells and insulated axons relay messages throughout the brain. Here too, the researchers believe TBI-affected brains will reveal a signature pattern not seen in PTSD.

Once reliable biomarkers emerge for each condition, clinicians will have more evidence on which to base their diagnoses and therapy recommendations.

EDITOR'S NOTE: ARTICLE REPRINTED FROM VA RESEARCH CURRENTS

VA-Led Study: Role of Screening, Monitoring in Early Kidney Disease Unclear

Screening for early kidney disease and systematic monitoring of kidney function in those diagnosed with early kidney disease may sound like good ideas, but there is no clinical proof whether they are worthwhile, according to a systematic literature review published in the April 17 *Annals of Internal Medicine* by a team headed by a Minneapolis VA physician. **Howard Fink**, MD, MPH, and colleagues evaluated 110 randomized clinical trials published in the medical literature from 1985 through November 2011 to see whether routine screening of people for early kidney disease, and routine monitoring and treatment of those diagnosed with early kidney disease improves their long-term outlook.



Dr. Fink

Fink said their findings don't necessarily mean that early screening or monitoring of kidney disease isn't helpful. He said it just shows that there is no clear evidence to prove that it is. "We didn't find direct evidence for benefits or harms," said Fink. "There were no randomized controlled trials for screening or monitoring,"

About 11 percent of American adults have chronic kidney disease in its earliest stages, according to the *Annals* review. The disease is more likely to occur in older people, particularly in people with other chronic medical conditions, such as heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes. Not everyone with chronic kidney disease will develop end-stage renal disease and need dialysis, but having early chronic kidney disease increases a person's risk of heart disease, stroke, kidney failure and death.

TRADE MISSION MAKES MINNESOTA STOP

Eurasian Health Care Leaders Visit VAMC



Acting Medical Center Director Barry Sharp welcomes visitors.

Twenty senior-level hospital administrators and physicians from nine Eurasian countries visited Minneapolis VA Medical Center on May 4 as part of the U.S. Department of Commerce Special American Business Internship Training (SABIT) Program of hospital administration.

The program is designed to familiarize the participants with U.S. industry standards and trends in hospital administration through visits with hospitals, clinics, U.S. government agencies, associations, private companies and academia. The visitors were from: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan.

During the Minneapolis visit, the delegation was briefed by **Barry Sharp**, acting director; **Helen Pearlman**, nurse executive; and **Peter Duane, MD**, medical director of the community-based outpatient clinics.

Afterward, the visitors toured the hospital. They observed a prototype of a prosthetics foot by **Andrew Hansen, PhD** (right, top photo) and visited the Spinal Cord Injury and Disorder Center.

Minneapolis VA cardiologist **Viorel Florea, MD**, (right, bottom photo), was born in Moldova. He met briefly with the two Moldovan visitors, one of whom lives in a city only 60 miles from the VA doctor's birthplace. Moldova is a country of only six million people. The delegation also visited Mayo Clinic, Medtronic and the University of Minnesota.





Great Day For a Stroll Around the Campus

The 2nd annual VA2K in Minneapolis drew more than 200 participants on May 16 and raised approximately \$1300 for homeless veterans, according to Wellness Is Now (WIN) program coordinator Cynthia Tomczak. Nationwide, 171 VA sites held similar events with 22,000 participants. More than \$240,000 in donations and goods were raised!

Minneapolis VA Tailors Plan to Expand Mental Health Staff

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki recently announced the department would add approximately 1,600 mental health clinicians as well as nearly 300 support staff to its existing workforce. VA estimates that 21 clinicians and three support personnel will be hired to support mental health operations at the Minneapolis VA Health Care System (VAHCS) and recruitment is underway.

VA has an existing workforce of 20,696 mental health staff that includes nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers. Currently, the Minneapolis VAHCS employs 265 mental health clinicians, support staff and trainees at the medical center in Minneapolis and 11 community-based outpatient clinics in Minnesota and western Wisconsin.

VA anticipates the majority of mental health clinicians and support staff will be hired locally within approximately six months and the most hard-to-fill positions filled by the end of the second quarter of FY 2013.

Interested mental health care providers can find additional information about VA careers online at www.va.careers.va.gov. Open positions at www.usajobs.gov



Getting to Work

EDITOR'S NOTE: With start of construction of the parking ramp this fall, surface parking will be reduced by 109 handicapped accessible spaces and 124 normal spaces. How will this affect you? In this issue, *On the Beat* starts a series of profiles of staff who commute using public transportation, car pool, and van pool to the Medical Center

Martha Manthie, speech pathologist, has worked at the Medical Center for 26 years. She lives in the Nokomis neighborhood. Public transportation was always used in her family. She has used public transportation to come to work here for about 20 years and has been enrolled in the transit plan since it was introduced. It's been a cheap, convenient way to get to the Medical Center. She said she always brings a book, has never felt unsafe, and has had many good experiences traveling to and from the Medical Center by bus and light rail.

Jackie Leveille, Director of Environment Management Service, has used public transportation from the first day she started work here in February. Jackie lives about 25 miles north of Big Lake, the rail head for the North Star train. With the price of gas and the traffic congestion in Minneapolis and the suburbs, the train and light rail seemed to her to be the most convenient mode of travel to the Medical Center. She has met many interesting people even an old classmate from Foley High School. The ride, both on the train and on light rail, has been comfortable and safe.



Health & Wellness Fair Draws Staff And Veterans

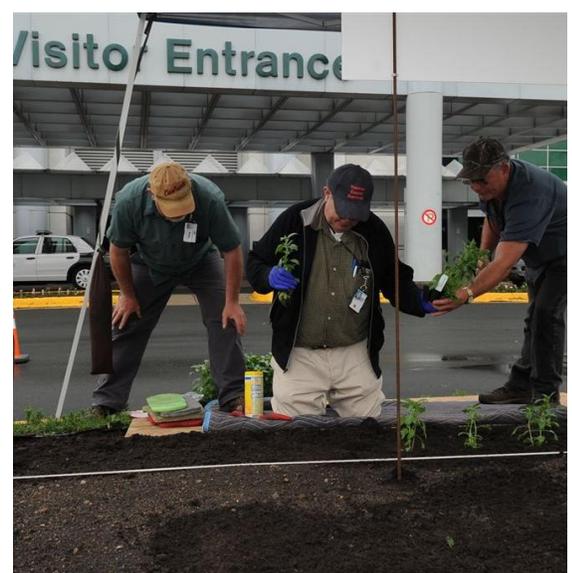
The annual day-long event organized by the Minneapolis VA Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Committee on May 16 offered screenings, information flyers, and valuable advice from experts.



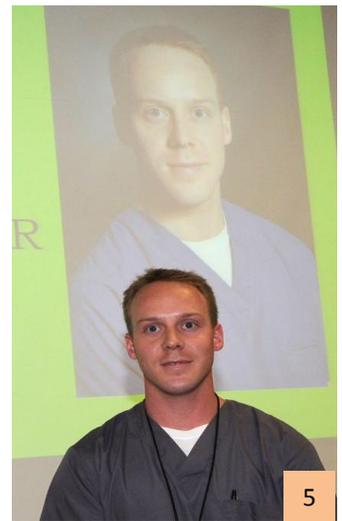


2nd Annual Cancer Survivor's Day

Physician assistant Gobind Tarchand (L) and nurse practitioner Mary Schuleter (R) welcome participants to 2nd annual Cancer Survivors Day. After formal presentations, there was a planting of flowers outside the front of the medical center. About 80 cancer survivors attended the event.



Minneapolis VA Nursing Excellence Awards for 2012



PHOTOS: **1)** Laurie Lacina, Licensed Practical Nurse, Outpatient Mental Health, and her family; **2)** Mapuana Skeen, Medical Support Assistant 2L ; **3)** Rhonda Donahue, Clinical Nurse Leader 3L, center; **4)** Lori Barker RN PACU holding flowers; **5)** Mike Smith, nursing assistant, 1E; **6)** Nursing Team Award, Unit 4J, Conrad Lyons, asst. nurse manager; Sarah McDonald RN; Shannon Geragi, LPN; Kim Corcoran, RN; Stephanie Olson, NA; Nina Pagel, nurse manager; Jaime Counihan, VALOR student.

Milestones – Congratulations!

<p>50 YEARS Virginia M. Nitardy</p> <p>45 YEARS Khalil Ahmed</p> <p>40 YEARS Brian T. Walsh</p> <p>30 YEARS Lesley S. Mundy Linda A. Jarosz Patricia J. Kangas Kevin J. Roberts Benito Garcia Cari Ann Junkers Mary F. Dahlheimer Ann M. Johnson Norman C. Hendrickson Gregory A. Supalo</p>	<p>25 YEARS Wendy J. Pepin Diane C. MacLennan Susan C. Neumann Jerome H. Abrams Cheryl A. Simcoe Janice M. Braun Janet K. Shambow Jill R. Vogstrom Charles R. Purcell Jonathan D. Wheeler Scott F. Harvey Amy B. Johnson Eric J. Estabrook Mary L. Fettig Deann R. Sorenson Julie A. Flemming Joann M. Munyan Susan M. Wittkopf Tamasine Kolosky</p>	<p>20 YEARS Marcia S. Herke David DeLong Dixie L. Grace Erika M. Cashin Craig S. Roth MD William T. Miller Lawrence A. Parkhurst Sheryl A. Kittelson</p> <p>15 YEARS Stephen F. Holloway Mari E. Berglund Dominic E. Kielas Vicki Lynn Meinke Noreen K. Brandt Elizabeth M. Miller Dennis D. Pickett Marty W. Shades Damon J. Schleisman</p>	<p>10 YEARS Kyanya K. Thompson Carrie J. Wenner Vance R. Engelstad Areef Ishani Jian-Ming Li Mia J. Dobbs Kirt D. Raymond Estrella B. Cheever Connie J. Stately James Davis Mary Eng Vicki A. Koivisto Cynthia L. Rohr Amy Fenton Paul A. Raymond Joshua M. Bisch Michelle R. Shouse Fikre Y. Sundseth</p>
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A Place
to Rest,
Thanks to
VFW

Auxiliary

It can be a long walk down Veterans Drive from the light rail station to the Medical Center. Thanks to the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary (VFWA),



Department of Minnesota there are two benches adorned with the emblems of the 5 branches of the military where one can rest and relax along the way. Reva Swanson (pictured above), VFWA Hospital Representative, was instrumental in making these benches a reality.



TWINS VISIT VETS, SAY THANKS FOR OUR FREEDOM!

Minnesota Twins visited veterans at the medical center June 12. In photo above, manager Ron Gardenier, catcher Drew Butera, pitcher P.J. Walters, ex-player Tim Laudner (white cap) and ex-player Kent Hrbek (dark cap) chat with patient in the Spinal Cord Injury/Disorder Center. The manager, whose father was a Sgt. Major in the U.S. Army, said it was his way of thanking veterans for our freedom. Pictured below, Butera shakes hands with veteran in CLC dining room while TC Bear exercises with a veteran in the rehab gym.



NEWS FROM VA CENTRAL OFFICE



VHA “Mental Health Marathon (MHM) 5000 - VA is committed to hiring many mental health providers nationwide. VHA plans to hire 5,000 Mental Health Professionals who can provide care to Veterans and help them adjust to life after battle. A communications effort is underway that includes posters (left) and fliers posted in medical centers. Job postings appear on USAJOBS.gov.

Partnership to House 10,000 Homeless Veterans in 2012 – VA has announced that it will collaborate with the “100,000 Homes” Campaign and its 117 participating communities to help find permanent housing for 10,000 homeless Veterans this year.

VA Continues Long-Term Study on Gulf War Era Veterans - For the third time since the 1990-1991 Gulf War, VA researchers will contact Gulf War-era Veterans as a part of a long-term study of their health.

Program to Retrain 99,000 Unemployed Veterans - Starting May 15, unemployed Veterans between the ages of 35 and 60 can now apply for new benefits to cover education costs for up to one year through a joint VA and Department of Labor program that focuses on retraining 99,000 Veterans for high-demand jobs.

Women Veterans Task Force Draft Plan Released –VA is releasing for public comment a draft of its strategic report to address key issues facing women Veterans.

VA, American Heart Association’s “Go Red For Women” Fight Heart Disease - VA and the American Heart Association have entered into a formal agreement to raise awareness of heart disease and strokes among women Veterans and Service members, and wives of Veterans and military members.

New Veterans Retraining Assistance Program to Take Center Stage at Detroit VA for Vets Hiring Fair - In its ongoing efforts to provide unemployed Veterans with the education and training they need to compete for high-demand jobs, VA will seek out Veterans who may be qualified for its new Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) at the Detroit VA for Vets Hiring Fair June 26-28.

Are you a homeless Veteran?
At risk or know somebody who is?
VA Has Resources to Help Homeless Veterans

Make the Call to the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans
1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838)
www.va.gov/homeless

VA Home Front U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans invites you to participate in a free:

DROP-IN LEGAL CLINIC FOR VETERANS

CHILD SUPPORT & FAMILY, EMPLOYMENT, BENEFITS, EXPUNGEMENT & DEBT COLLECTION
Tuesday, July 10, 2012 9AM - 2PM | VA Medical Center
Flag Atrium Balcony Room 25 114 (ask information desk for directions)
1 Veterans Drive | Minneapolis, MN
FREE Parking at the VA Medical Center

Attorneys, MACV staff, County Veterans Service Officers, child support officers and VA Mental Health Homeless Program intake available throughout the day to assist veterans with questions, legal forms and counsel.

For more information contact:
Sara Sommarstrom, MACV - 651.224.0292 | ssommarstrom@mac-v.org

VETERANS please join us for the 20th Anniversary

StandDown

August 1st - 2nd, 2011

BOY SCOUT BASE CAMP, FORT SNELLING

FREE SERVICES AVAILABLE TO ALL VETERANS

Meals • Clothing • VA Benefits • Legal Assistance • Veteran's Court
Public Benefits • Federal & State Tax Assistance • VA Medical,
Dental, and Optometry Care • Haircuts • State DMV • Housing
Assistance • Employment Assistance • AA/NA Meetings
Mental Health Counseling • Wellness & More

FOR FASTER REGISTRATION PLEASE PROVIDE PROOF OF SERVICE (DD214)

MINNESOTA ASSISTANCE COUNCIL FOR VETERANS



GATES OPEN
8:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.

REGISTRATION
8:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M. Wednesday
8:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M. Thursday

WELCOMING
CEREMONY
11:00 A.M. August 1st

All bags will be subject to
search upon entrance – no
alcohol or drugs allowed.

For more information call
MACV at 612.726.1327

www.mac-v.org

DIRECTIONS TO BOY SCOUT BASE CAMP:

Conveniently located off Highway 55 and Bloomington Road in Fort Snelling.
1/3 mile from the Fort Snelling Light Rail Station. [Click here for map.](#)

Free parking and shuttle from Light Rail Station Platform



Minneapolis VA Health Care System

Group Therapies for PTSD

*We would like to invite
you to join our study*

This project is being conducted by the VA and the Veterans Meditation Project (VMP). It is a collaboration of research professionals at the Veteran's Affairs Hospital.

You may be eligible if you:

- ☆ Are 18 years of age or older.
- ☆ Have a diagnosis of PTSD.
- ☆ Are a male or female Veteran from any conflict or era.

The Study:

- Your participation is voluntary.
- If you are eligible and participate in all requirements of the study you may receive up to \$445 in support of your time and travel.
- The study consists of 9 weekly group sessions lasting up to 2.5 hours each.
- Participation will require your attendance at 5 additional assessment sessions varying in length from 2-3 hours.
- Blood samples will be taken and brain activity will be measured using non-intrusive EEG technology.
- There may be no direct benefit to you for being in this study, but your participation will help us to improve the care and recovery of patients with PTSD.
- We hope to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of group therapies for PTSD.
- The Principal Investigator is Dr. Kelvin Lim.

For additional information,
contact **Study Coordinator
Doris Clancy** at 612-467-5203



PTSD



RAISE AWARENESS



Meet Veterans who have been there.

Share what you learn with someone who needs help.

Maybe that someone is you.

June 2012

Visit www.ptsd.va.gov

