

**Department of Veterans Affairs  
Federal Advisory Committee on Prosthetics & Special Disabilities  
Programs**

**November 7- 8, 2007**

**Committee Members Present:**

Thomas H. Miller, Chairman  
Douglas G. Smith, M.D.  
Norman B. Hartnett  
Jerry P. Steelman

Paul Rao, Ph.D.  
Robert D. Rondenelli, M.D.  
Margaret G. Stineman, M.D.  
Robert S. Gailey, Ph.D., P.T.

Joseph A. Miller

**Guests**

Ms. Cimndi Kumpf  
American Occupational Therapy  
Association

Ms. Michaela Lemen  
Rehabilitation Services

Mr. Tim Nanof  
American Occupational Therapy  
Association

Mr. Chad Martin  
The American Legion

Dr. John Townsend  
VHA's Ophthalmology Service

***Minutes — Wednesday, November 7, 2007***

**Welcome and Opening Remarks — Mr. Miller, Chairman.**

Meeting was called to order by the Chair. Committee recommendations for President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors were accepted and included in the final report, dated July 2007. The recommendations hope to accomplish three goals:

- To serve those injured in the line of duty while defending the nation
- To support their recovery and successful rehabilitation and
- To simplify the sometimes overly complex systems that frustrate some injured service members and their families and impede efficient care.

## **Highlights from presentations:**

**Brief Update on Rehabilitation Services – Dr. Lucille Beck, Chief Consultant for Rehabilitation Services.** Program major focus has been on polytrauma and brain injuries. Chiropractic care has been added to Rehabilitation Services. The recently appointed national program director is Dr. Tony Lisi. The co-leads on TBI and PTSD LOA are Dr. Ira Katz, Chief of Mental Health Services and Dr. Beck.

**Annual Update on Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation — Dr. Barbara Sigford, National Program Director, Veteran Health Administration Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation.** An overview was provided on performance measure for percent of inpatients with new stroke, amputations, or traumatic brain injury with initial Functional Independence Measure assessment entered into Functional Status and Outcomes Database. Rehabilitation Services will continue to be provided as needed across the full spectrum of medical care of various levels of intensity and in different care settings. Regardless of the origin of the rehabilitation referral, once a consult to a rehabilitation program is initiated, all consults should be screened to determine the intensity and location of care. Driver Rehabilitation Program education held at VAMCs Long Beach (April 2007) and Tampa (September). Decision Support System Product Codes were approved and the liability insurance contract was renewed. VHA Directive 2007-013, re: all OIF/OEF veterans receiving medical care within VA must be screened for possible Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Veterans with positive TBI screens must be offered further evaluation and treatment by clinicians with expertise in the area of TBI. The Committee was informed of a guide for families and friends of patients who have sustained a TBI. The guide is titled “Polytrauma Rehabilitation Family Education Manual.”

**Brief Update on Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) Outcome Measures – Dorothy Williams, Ph.D., Supervisor of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.** VR&E provides veterans and service members with service connected disabilities the necessary services to assist them in preparing for, finding and maintaining employment. For veterans who are unable to return to work, the program provides services to assist them with achieving maximum independence in daily living. VR&E is a case management, employment-driven program that utilize college, technical school, on-the-job training, or special training at rehabilitation facilities to prepare veterans for suitable employment.

**Update on Prosthetics & Sensory Aids Service (Open Forum) - Mr. Downs, Chief of Prosthetics & Clinical Logistics Officer.**

Mr. Downs provided highlights from an Open Forum for OIF/OEF veterans held in July, at DAV Headquarters. The next Open Forum is scheduled for November 28, 2007. A number of handouts prepared by Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service were distributed to Committee. He announced, Mr. Robert Baum, was

selected as Deputy Chief Officer. A list of conferences and workshops completed this year and planned for 2008 was distributed to the Committee. In addition to national educational opportunities offered from major orthotic and prosthetic (O&P) component manufacturers, a combination of national and local educational initiatives will ensure VA clinicians will keep abreast of the latest developments in O&P and that our patients continue to be provided the latest in technological advances.

**Eye Casualties OEF & OIF – MAJ. Eric Weichel, M.D., USA. MC Director, Vitreoretinal Surgery Department of Ophthalmology, Walter Reed Army Medical Center.** Dr. Weichel gave an excellent presentation on eye casualties for soldiers. His presentation is currently in submission for publication in peer-reviewed journals. The authors have requested that we not disseminate this information until after it is published.

**Update on Amputee Care – Dr. Gail Latlief, Director of Amputation Program, in Tampa; Cindy Poorman, Rehabilitation Planning Specialist, VACO; and Neal Eckrich, Prosthetics Program Manager.**

Panelist made a presentation on: 2007 accomplishments, such as, the Amputation Clinical Practice Guidelines and Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation/Prosthetic Collaboration; Proposal for Amputation System of Care, which will enhance the current system; Elements of Best Practice; and Technology. On December 10-14<sup>th</sup>, Amputation Rehabilitation Conference will be held in Clearwater Beach, FL.

**Results of Gallup Survey - Dr. Lucille Beck, Chief Consultant for Rehabilitation Services.**

This survey was conducted by the Gallup Organization, to provide a better understanding of major amputees' opinions regarding (1) How well VA has helped them achieve transition from military treatment facilities to VHA, and (2) Postoperative delivery of administrative, medical, operative, prosthetic and rehabilitation services. The results show, major limb amputees have been generally satisfied with their experiences with VA care, trust VA to provide quality care and would return in the future. However, opportunities exist for improvement. Opportunities exist to create greater loyalty to VA Healthcare beyond simply meeting basic expectations for satisfaction and quality.

**Thursday, November 8, 2007**

**Annual Report on Audiology & Speech Pathology National Program Office -  
Dr. Lucille Beck, Chief Consultant for Rehabilitation Services.**

The following are hot topics in Audiology: Increasing prevalence of hearing loss and tinnitus (noise and blast); TBI related symptoms (hearing loss, dizziness, tinnitus, processing disorders); development of best practices and standardized protocols. Speech Pathology hot topics are: Dysphagia management; TBI and polytrauma (evaluation of TBI-related symptoms – memory and cognitive disorders, processing disorders); Evolving treatment technologies and paradigms; and development of best practices and standardized protocols.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) has agreed to allow VHA to continue collecting and using National Outcomes Measurement System (NOMS) data internally until 2008 pending re-negotiation of the business associate and data transfer agreements. These agreements have been sent to ASHA for discussion.

On December 3-7<sup>th</sup>, Vision Loss and TBI Conference will be held, in San Antonio, TX. Committee members congratulated Dr. Beck on being awarded the 2007 Presidential Rank Award for Distinguished Executive Service.

**Committee Discussion Summary:**

1. Committee would like an update on Amputee care with a national vision, during meeting scheduled in 2008.
2. Committee would like to know, how chiropractic care fits in the big picture of rehabilitation special programs. An invitation will be sent to the Director for Chiropractic Medicine, Dr. Tony Lisi, to provide an update on chiropractic care during the Spring 2008 meeting.
3. The committee requests an update on VA's disability process. VA is the leader in special disability programs, and is the best option for lifelong care. An invitation will be sent to the Veterans Benefits Administration's Assistant Director for Compensation & Pension (C&P) Exams, Mr. Tom Pamperin, to make a presentation on C&P Exams, during the Spring 2008 meeting.
4. Committee would like an update on Telehealth in rehabilitation practice. An invitation will be sent to the Chief Consultant for Care Coordination Services to provide an update during our meeting in the Spring 2008.

5. Committee requests an update on Polytrauma System of Care day programs and workload data. An invitation will be sent to Dr. Sigford for an update during the Spring 2008 meeting.