



Department of Veterans Affairs
CARES Commission

February 11, 2004

*Dr. Robert H. Roswell
Under Secretary for Health
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington DC 20420*

Dear Dr. Roswell,

It is said that one can determine the character of a nation by observing how it treats its military veterans. To that, I'd like to add a commentary that in providing health care for America's veterans the staff at VA medical centers embody the commitment, sensitivity and respect of all of us, reflecting the view of their fellow Americans.

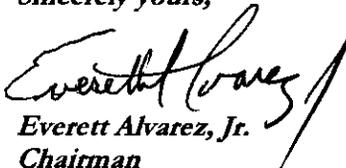
During site visits, at the many public meetings, and informal exchanges with veterans and their families, the CARES Commission made some observations that I would like to pass on to you. Our veterans are rightfully proud of their service, are grateful that their country provides such quality medical care, and are full of praise for the VA staff who provide such care.

We saw the dynamics of health care delivery in a spirit of teamwork. There was real enthusiasm shown as the VA people went about their tasks. In a medical system challenged as it is, the dedication to service yielded innovation across the board. We saw nurse-managed treatment teams, physician assistants and clinical pharmacists working hand in glove with physicians and other medical professionals on inpatient units and on primary care teams, registered dieticians as part of specialty and primary care clinics, and somewhat beleaguered support personnel providing administrative duties to make all the good work fit together. Additionally we saw the same commitment of service in those who are the behind the scenes team members such as engineering, supply, housekeeping staff, and the list goes on.

And what would we do without the thousands of volunteers we saw in reception areas, on the treatment units, and generally expressing their respect and, I submit, love for our veterans?

Bob, you have to be proud to be leading the Veterans Health Administration. On behalf of my fellow CARES Commissioners, please pass on to your colleagues our gratitude for all they do so capably and for making our job so rewarding and fulfilling.

Sincerely yours,


Everett Alvarez, Jr.
Chairman
CARES Commission