

# VA Puget Sound NEWS

*Proudly Serving  
Veterans of the  
Northwest*



VA Puget Sound Health Care System • American Lake & Seattle

**Winter 1998**

## 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

Mark your calendars for September 23, 1999, and join us as we celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Lake Division of VA Puget Sound. Festivities will include speakers, retrospective exhibits, special awards and recognitions, marching bands, and refreshments.

When American Lake first opened in March 1924, it provided long-term psychiatric treatment to veterans. Through the years, with changes in health care to better meet the needs of veterans, the focus changed. American Lake is now a multi-care facility recognized for innovative leadership, and a steadfast dedication to providing the best care possible to men and women who have served their country.

American Lake is proud of its leading research programs and investigations in areas of aging, oncology, endocrinology, and mineral metabolism. We boast the country's best and most comprehensive Blind Rehabilitation programs as well as comprehensive mental health care programs, residential treatment

programs for homeless veterans and those with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Additionally, we are known for our compassionate nursing home care of veterans suffering with Alzheimer's Disease.

Our clinical advances at American Lake include: on-site clinics for gastroenterology and a newly remodeled GI procedure laboratory; a sleep apnea program and outpatient sleep disorders laboratory; on-site echo-cardiography; and a cardiology clinic providing cardiovascular procedures that were formerly available only at Seattle Division. Perhaps most significant has been the August opening of a new 13,000-square-foot ambulatory care facility.

If you have any pictures, newspaper articles or other historical memorabilia that depict the American Lake Division, we would love to borrow it for our retrospective displays. Please contact the Office of Public Affairs at (206) 764-2435. Watch for more news about the Celebration. 



American Lake, Building 7, under construction May 1923.

## Comments from the Director

On December 16, VA Puget Sound hosted Vice President Gore's Kick-off of Hassle Free Communities, part of his National Performance Review for reinventing Government. With speeches from Vice President Gore's Senior Policy Advisor, Morley Winograd, and Mayor Paul Schell, Seattle was officially designated as one of three cities nationwide to pilot this partnership program that links city, county, state and federal government agencies in providing access to the services citizens want, where they want them. Dallas and Kansas City are the other pilot cities.



At the same ceremony, we applauded our employees' commitment to excellence and customer service by formally presenting Hammer Awards to over 30 VA Puget Sound employees and 40 Regional Office employees. These awards recognize our collaborative efforts with VA Regional Benefits Office to create a shared computer link, and the work done with Regional Office and Fort Lewis to establish pre-discharge ratings for soon-to-be-veterans. Hammer Awards are given to federal agencies that have streamlined government and created a customer service focus. Our Customer Service Award is an example of the type of cooperative effort that we can employ to improve service delivery.

With this external attention, comes the recognition of our growing workload and the many changes that have occurred this year, creating additional stress for many. This has not gone unnoticed. Your personal dedication ensures that we remain an organization that strives for, and achieves excellence. 



# ***It Takes a Team to Care for Our Veterans...***

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**F**rankie Manning, Nurse Executive, had the vision and resourcefulness to staff a dedicated team of employees who spend many Saturdays taking VA to the veterans in their communities. From the Cascades and Olympic Mountains to the Pacific Ocean and around the Puget Sound, a volunteer team of government employees spends its time reaching out to veterans who might not otherwise receive health care. The outreach team works in cooperation with local service organizations and veteran groups to set up community-based screening and registration activities.

Port Angeles, Olympia, Mount Vernon, Redmond, Bellingham, and Hoquiam are but a few of the many locations visited by this talented team, and include the Lummi, Quinault, and Quileute Indian Reservations. The team includes clinical and support staff who spend Saturdays registering as many as 350 veterans who attend the health screenings.

Many veterans expressed amazement and voiced appreciation that a government agency would travel to communities to provide such services. In at least one case, the team traveled to the home of a house-bound veteran near Port Angeles. This brings a whole new meaning to the word “customer service.” Employees have gained an appreciation of the individual communities and their veterans’ needs as well. They look forward to future outreach efforts. ♡



*Fae Moore has her blood pressure checked.*



*Jeffery Carvish and William Polls enjoy the camaraderie of the outreach team visit.*



*Frankie Manning, Nurse Executive, performs foot care during an outreach visit.*

# People In The News

## **Barbara Hatred Wins Prestigious Award**

Barbara Hatred, Director, Voluntary Section at VA Puget Sound, was recently selected to receive the 1998 Female Non-Veteran Outstanding Service to Veterans Award. The award was presented by Francis Agnes, Chairman of Washington State Veterans Affairs Advisory Council, at ceremonies held during a Veterans Day celebration in Auburn, Washington, that also included a parade and a luncheon. Barbara has worked with VA for 25-years and looks to both her father, a disabled veteran, and her sister, Mary, an Air Force veteran, for her continued inspiration in serving veterans. ♡



*Ruth Schoonover presents a check to Margaret Hammond, MD.*



*Barbara Hatred*

## **\$10,000 Donation Advances SCI Research**

The Women's Auxiliary to the Military Order of Cootie, an Honor Degree of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, has donated a check for \$10,000 to the Spinal Cord

Injury (SCI) Center at VA Puget Sound's Seattle Division. This award will support the on-going research in regeneration of spinal cord after injury.

The Cooties, as they are more commonly known, developed during WWI as volunteers paid "buddy visits" to the returning hospitalized veterans suffering the effects of mustard gas and other war-related injuries, not the least of which was body lice. Each year the national president of the auxiliary is asked to select a project to which the women's group lends its financial support. Auxiliary membership numbers 15,000 volunteers nationally. During her term as Supreme President, Ruth Schoonover of Bellingham, Washington, chose the spinal cord injury project which will be administered by James W. Little, MD, Principal Investigator and Associate Director, SCI.

Schoonover presented the check to Margaret Hammond, MD, Director, Spinal Cord Injury Program, in a special ceremony December 4<sup>th</sup>. ♡

# Veterans, We Salute You!

National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Program pays tribute and expresses appreciation to hospitalized veterans, increases community awareness of the role of the medical center and encourages citizens to visit hospitalized veterans and to become involved as volunteers.

## **Seattle Program:**

Wednesday, February 10, 1999  
10:00am in BB-108

## **American Lake Program:**

Wednesday, February 17, 1999  
at 1:00pm in Auditorium,  
Building 9 with program being  
presented by Bethel High  
School. ♡



**JCAHO** is around the corner...it takes all of us working together to make this happen. Thanks for all of your hard work preparing for the Mock Survey. The next few months will be stressful, but together we can be successful in preparing for JCAHO! ♡

# Breakthroughs In Medicine

## Telemedicine – a Technological Approach to Health Care

Pilot telemedicine or video-conferencing programs in Cardiology and Surgery were launched at VA Puget Sound: Seattle Division and Anchorage VA Medical Center in 1998. Caring for the estimated 60,000 veterans in Alaska has been difficult due to remote population areas.

Previously, veterans traveled to the Seattle area for specialty care, or Seattle-based physicians traveled to Alaska to provide the care.

Video-conferencing systems are now used to allow the physician and patient to see and hear each other in real time. Dana Lynge, MD, staff surgeon, and Jack Murray, MD, staff cardiologist, at VA Puget Sound, provide pre-operative surgical assessments for Alaska patients. Video-conferencing allows them to interview patients and their local



## TeleMedicine VISN20

*Get Connected to  
Distance HealthCare*

providers, review laboratory data, medications, X-rays, echocardiograms, and other studies as well as medical records. The obvious savings include the approximately \$1,000 round-trip airfare per visit not to mention time in transit. Patients and physicians alike are pleased with this technological advance.

Additional telemedicine programs in Dermatology, Spinal Cord Injury, Rehabilitation Home Care, Oral Surgery and other specialties are planned for 1999. Congress has appropriated \$1 million to expand this program to 235 sites throughout Alaska for both VA and Department of Defense facilities.

For information regarding the Telemedicine Project, contact Rachel Wiebe, R.D., Telemedicine Coordinator at (206) 768-5294. [☞](#)

## Alzheimer's Research

A three-year VA Medical Research merit review program awarded to Sanjay Asthana, MD, will study estrogen replacement and its positive effect on awareness and its reduction in risk of developing Alzheimer's Disease. If awareness is improved and sustained over a period of time, it is hoped that this will promote skills for independent living.

Another leader in Alzheimer's research is Suzanne Craft, PhD, who is also studying improvement of mental sharpness in patient with Alzheimer's Disease. Her three-year VA funded investigation will examine two insulin-sensitizing agents (troglitazone and metformin) in a new approach to Alzheimer's treatment.

Dr. Asthana is a Research Assistant Professor of Medicine at the UW and works at American Lake as a staff physician in Geriatrics Research Education Clinical Center (GRECC). Dr. Craft has been a GRECC investigator since 1994 and has received funding from the National Institutes of Health and the Alzheimer's Association. [☞](#)

## Prostate Cancer Research

VA Puget Sound continues its national research activities through a variety of grants. Recently, two prostate cancer researchers, Stephen Plymate, MD, and Robert Vessella, PhD, were awarded a total of \$661,400 over the next three years. Dr. Plymate's study will look at the role of insulin-like growth factor (IGF) in prostate cancer. Dr. Vessella will examine the interaction of the body's normal tissue with prostate tumor cells and what happens when the tumor spreads to bone.

Dr. Plymate is a Research Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Washington (UW) and works at the American Lake Division as Deputy Associate Director of the Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center (GRECC). Dr. Vessella is a Professor of Urology at the UW and a VA Research Scientist. [☞](#)



# Veterans

## Our

*family,*

*Our friends.*

***Back On His Feet —***

***The VA “made  
all the difference  
in the world.”***



**W**hen Gordon Penix was asked to speak at a VA executive leadership conference this past spring, it was not a role he had ever aspired to. He talked about his experiences with a health maintenance organization (HMO) and VA Puget Sound. He heaped praises on VA staff who “made all the difference in the world.”

In June 1997 when a small plane crashed into a glacier in British Columbia, Gordon Penix’ life was changed forever. His legs were partially paralyzed.

He spent several weeks in a Vancouver hospital before returning to Seattle. Once back home, Penix began the long and arduous process of rehabilitation through his HMO. He was discharged home confined to a barely mobile wheelchair that he was unable to navigate through his bathroom door. Always an upbeat and physically active fellow, he struggled with his lack of mobility. He no longer wanted to go out in public. It didn’t take long for friends and relatives to persuade him to seek further treatment with VA Puget Sound.

At the VA, Penix met a dedicated and caring Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) staff. “I wouldn’t be where I am today without them,” he said. “I was scared to even try, but Kendra Betz, my physical therapist, convinced me that I could do it. She was right!”

Now an outpatient, he continues his exercise regimen every day. “Even though,” he laughs, “I’d much rather be learning a new software program on my computer.”

Penix’ injuries have not dampened his enthusiasm for outdoor activities. Before his accident, he was an ardent fisherman, runner, bicyclist, and water and snow skier. A fishing trip this past September netted him a 36-lb sturgeon. He recently test-drove a recumbent bicycle that he plans to master. Today, he wears leg braces and walks with the aid of crutches or a walker.

Retiring as a Master Chief from the U.S. Coast Guard in 1967, Penix went back to school at age 46. He graduated from the University of Washington in 1979 with a degree in Social Work. He currently works for a Seattle law firm as a legal investigator and trial coordinator. He and his wife, Carole, have been married 50 years and have three daughters Carla, Lynn, and Kim. 



*Gordon Penix test drives a recumbent bicycle.*

## ***Veteran's Web Survival Kit***

**VETERAN COMPLAINT HOTLINKS** is a long list of links to people to whom you can take your case if you have a complaint that is not being addressed. [www.orbiter.com/ramrod](http://www.orbiter.com/ramrod)

**MILITARY USA** is an excellent way to find your buddies and info about your unit's reunion. [www.militaryusa.com/enhance/enhance.html-ssi](http://www.militaryusa.com/enhance/enhance.html-ssi)

**TRANSITION ASSISTANCE ONLINE** lists employment opportunities for vets and soldiers leaving military service. It includes a resume database, job postings, and company profiles. [www.taonline.com](http://www.taonline.com)

**POW/MIA DATABASE**, maintained by the library of Congress, posts the current official status of missing servicemen.

[lcweb2.loc.gov/pow/powhome.html](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pow/powhome.html)



## ***Y2K: Why You Need To Know***

By now, most people have heard of “Y2K” or “millennium bug” – the fact that computers and computer chips in equipment have been programmed for years in such a way that they may be incapable of successfully functioning when the calendar rolls over to January 1, 2000.

**Why Respond?** There is a serious and potential impact on us as a health care facility. Computers and more importantly, computer chips in medical devices and other health care equipment may not function properly. This also includes the systems that provide lights, heat, water, and medical gases and the facility systems that operate our alarms, elevators and telephones as well as other vital functions.

**What's Being Done?** VA Puget Sound has put in place a major information gathering assessment of equipment, devices, software, and systems that may be at risk. Ninety percent of the assessment is complete; soon we will be at 100%. We are beginning to order equipment that will need to be replaced. In the next few months, we will be placing “Y2K OK” stickers on all equipment that we are confident will continue to operate properly.

**Why Do I Need to Know?** We are a complex organization. We rely on your eyes and ears to help identify any equipment and operating systems that may have been overlooked. Know the systems and equipment that are most important to your work and how this equipment may be affected. Please become aware of your individual work environment and the circumstance you may face if systems or equipment should malfunction due to the changeover. Reassure your colleagues, patients, and their families that we are working aggressively to anticipate problems and work through them ahead of time. The same high quality care that exists now at VA Puget Sound will also exist on January 1, 2000.

In the coming months, we will continue to provide you with tips and information on the Y2K change over.

**For more Y2K Information contact: Michael Denney (206) 764-2005. ☎**

## ***VA Puget Sound NEWS***

VA Puget Sound News is published quarterly, each autumn, winter, spring and summer by the Office of Public Affairs. VA Puget Sound Health Care System proudly serves veterans throughout the Northwest with facilities located in Seattle and at American Lake. VA Puget Sound is part of the VISN 20 network of health care facilities.



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