

Diabetes Mellitus

About 16 million people in the U.S. have diabetes mellitus; however, only 10 million are aware of it. Increased thirst, urination (especially at night), or blurred vision may indicate the presence of diabetes. People who are older; overweight; of African American, American Indian, Asian, Latino or Pacific Islander backgrounds; or who have a relative with diabetes are at higher risk.

With Type 1 diabetes you either do not make enough insulin (a hormone that helps turn food into energy) or cannot use the insulin you produce. With type 2 diabetes, your body makes insulin, but cannot use it the way it should. Type 2 diabetes can be treated with modest weight loss, exercise/activity, oral medication, and insulin. Acute complications include having a blood sugar too high (hyperglycemia) or too low (hypoglycemia).

Self-management is important for both types of diabetes and involves choosing a healthful diet, physical activity, and specifically prescribed medications. Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure in the US, the leading cause of blindness in adults, and the leading cause of amputations. In addition, persons with diabetes are twice as likely to have heart attacks and strokes than those without diabetes. "Support groups are the most important issue. They build camaraderie and support," states Brownie Brownsteiner, VFW member, Puget Sound Volunteer, and Diabetes Care Team Screening Coordinator.

Cardiovascular risk factors include smoking, high blood pressure, high blood fats, and high blood sugar. If you have diabetes you should keep your blood pressure below 130/85 mm/Hg, your LDL cholesterol (the bad cholesterol) below 100 mg/dl, and your sugar before eating between 80 to 120 mg/dl. Additional steps for managing diabetes include having your eyes and kidneys checked annually; checking your feet every day for cuts, splinters, blisters or infection; and asking your clinician to test the feeling in your feet annually (more often if you have poor feeling).

Support groups/classes are held monthly at both divisions. For more information, call either: American Lake Division - 1-800-329-8387 or Seattle Division - (206) 764-2721

Comments from the COO

A key element of every outstanding organization is the commitment it makes to educating and training its employees. VA has made this commitment nationally as part of its goal of being "an employer of choice"



Sandy Nielsen

and by establishing the High Performance Development Model as a structure for assessing and developing employee skills.

VA Puget Sound has expanded the national efforts by tripling its budget for training and educational opportunities, by recruiting a top-notch corps of in-house education professionals, and by establishing an intensive Core Competency Leadership Series. The series is directed at key staff and supervisors. The first staff session was launched in November 1999 and concluded in April; the second session will finish shortly. Other sessions will be launched in July and September of this year. Supervisory training began in May and will conclude by mid-August.

The ultimate goal is to extend the training to employees throughout the organization, with those first trained acting as mentors and coaches for those who follow in later sessions. Course content for the 17-day course has focused on systems analysis for problem solving, negotiation skills, as well as understanding your own strengths, weaknesses, and how your skills are perceived by others within the organization.

Despite the somewhat high number of days involved in training, we on the Executive Board believe that the time is an investment in the future of the organization, at both the leadership and the front-line levels.

Quality in Action

Quality

Diabetic Eye Care

Diabetes is one of the four most common causes of blindness. What many people do not know is that it can lead to cataracts or haziness of the lens, glaucoma, swelling of the retina, or the formation of new blood vessels within the eye, which may bleed.

The clue to effective treatment is in the EARLY detection of the disease, often before symptoms occur. VA and medical providers recommend annual eye examinations, even if everything seems to be fine.

A diabetic eye exam should be scheduled for any of the following reasons:

- Lower extremity amputation due to diabetes
- Protein in the urine
- Diabetes for more than 20 years
- Pregnancy
- Recent decrease in vision

A diabetic eye examination should be performed annually. For more information contact: Ellen Martin at (206) 764-2758, Seattle Division.

Chronic Disease Self-Management Series

The Chronic Disease Self-Management Series is a six-week program designed by staff to assist patients in coping with chronic illnesses. It is designed to enhance treatment and disease education. Examples include diabetes, cardiac rehabilitation, arthritis management and lung programs emphasizing:

- Frustration, fatigue, pain and isolation
- Maintaining and improving strength, flexibility and endurance
- Appropriate use of medications
- Communicating effectively
- Nutrition
- Evaluating new treatments.

“Rather than ‘Pulling you out of the water,’ or ‘Preventing you from falling into the water,’ the self-management approach ‘Teaches you how to swim in the water,’” states Kathy Linnell, RN, and member of the new Diabetes Care Team. This new program has been embraced by Veterans Service Organizations. For more information, contact Kathy Linnell, RN, at (206) 764-2044.

An Advocate

for Our Patients

When patient issues arise or concerns cannot be resolved at the local unit or service line level, the Patient Advocacy Program steps in to smooth and expedite resolutions. This program is designed to strengthen, personalize and enhance the relationships between patients, and the medical center. To better meet the needs of our veterans, VA Puget Sound’s advocates address a broad range of issues. More information is available by calling:

Patient Advocates:

Carolyn Batson
American Lake (253)
583-2585



Gladys Longosky
Seattle (206) 764-2160



Minority Veterans Affairs Coordinator:

Denise Grant (206)
768-5363



Women Veterans Coordinator:

Georgia K. E. Vitense
(206) 764-2441



PT Phone Home – Phase II

Over 10 years ago, VA Puget Sound Health Care System entered into a collaborative project with community organizations to provide a television set for every veteran patient room. This project, known as “PT Phone Home,” was a nationwide success.

VA Puget Sound is currently involved in PT Phone Home, Phase II, with the goal of placing computers in designated patient areas throughout the American Lake and Seattle divisions. Over \$20,000

in donations have been received to begin this project. The first patient computer link-up will be located in the Seattle Division Spinal Cord Injury Unit.

“With continued community support, we plan to locate at least one computer in each patient area/unit. Staff members and volunteers will be training veterans to access the Internet for patient education,” states Barbara Hatred, Director Voluntary Section, Human Resource Management Service.

VA Researchers Unraveling Mechanisms of Diabetes

- ▼ Steven Kahn, MB, ChB, UW Associate Professor of Medicine, and Director of the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), leads a large multi-center study to determine whether onset of type II diabetes can be prevented or delayed in people at high risk for the disease. Volunteers are randomly assigned to lifestyle education (diet and exercise) or medication (metformin or placebo) and are being followed over six years.
- ▼ Jerry Palmer, MD, UW Professor of Medicine, VA Chief of Endocrinology, Metabolism and Nutrition and Director of the Diabetes Endocrinology Research Center oversees a group that is attempting to sort out immune system processes that lead to type I or insulin-dependent diabetes, a disease in which the body's immune system mistakenly destroys insulin producing cells in the pancreas.
- ▼ Gayle Reiber, Ph.D., M.P.H., UW Associate Professor and of Public Health and Community Medicine, Diabetes Consultant to the World Health Organization and VA Research Scientist, is working with colleagues to conduct landmark research to determine whether protective footwear can help prevent foot ulcers and resultant amputations in people with diabetes. Her team is following participants over two years in a study evaluating two different types of insoles worn with special study shoes.

Katherine Bradley Receives Grant

Katharine A. Bradley, MD, MPH, VA Puget Sound Health Care System, Health Service Research Development investigator, Staff Physician and assistant professor, University of Washington, received a four-year \$239,725 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which concentrates on basic health care issues and improving care and support for people with chronic health conditions, the grant will support Bradley's work with women veterans, and her participation in the Foundation's prestigious Generalist Physician Faculty Scholars Program.

Prostate Cancer — the Second Most Common Disease in American Men

With 180,000 new cases of prostate cancer diagnosed each year, the disease is second only to lung cancer among men, and accounts for 37,000 deaths annually. In about 80 percent of the patients, it appears confined to the prostate gland and can be treated by surgery. Within five to seven years, however, about 30 percent of these men develop metastatic prostate cancer that almost always appears in bone. "Obviously these cells had already escaped from the gland," says Robert Vessella, PhD, Professor and Vice Chair of UW's Department of Urology, and VA Research Career Scientist.

Dr. Vessella and his colleagues are using a sensitive test to detect the presence of prostate specific antigen (PSA) in hopes of learning how prostate cancer progresses. What is still unknown is how some prostate cancer cells can take hold and spread, while others do not. "Once we understand these interactions," Dr. Vessella says, "we can then try to block them."



Iontophoresis and Diabetic Foot Research: The Next Step

Iontophoresis. Not a familiar word, but one that may open the door to preventing amputations in our diabetic veteran population. This aspect of diabetic foot research is under the direction of Ed Boyko, MD, Director of VA Puget Sound's Epidemiology Research and Information Center, Chief of the GIMC, and UW Associate Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology. Boyko is studying iontophoresis: an effective, painless method of delivering medication to a localized tissue area by applying electrical current to a solution of the medication. Research associate, Victoria Stensel, conducts doppler studies on diabetic volunteers' feet before and after iontophoresis using medications designed to increase blood vessel size. The changes within the blood vessels are captured using sophisticated equipment that records thousands of data points. Analysis of the data may unlock the secret to improving circulation and, therefore, delaying or preventing amputation.

ON THE NEWS

New Telemedicine Projects up and running in July

Starting in July, two new Telemedicine outreach projects will enable the Geriatrics Program at both divisions of VA Puget Sound to connect with veteran's homes at Orting and Retsil. The Tele-Psychiatry Program will connect VA Puget Sound Mental Health Service with the Bellingham Vet Center, the Walla Walla VA Medical Center with the Yakima Vet Center; and the Boise VA Medical Center with the Twin Falls Community Based Outreach Clinic.

Telemedicine is already an integral part of care at VA Puget Sound, and is now part of the Telemedicine Conferences within VISN 20's Northern Alliance, includes programs in Cardiology, Dermatology, Spinal Cord Injury-Home Care, Tumor Board, and Multi-disciplinary Oncology.

Public Recognition for VA Puget Sound Employees

During Public Recognition Day festivities on May 3, 2000, the Seattle Federal Executive Board (FEB) recognized 88 VA Puget Sound employees for excellence in leadership and team spirit. The ceremony, "Rainbow of Stars for the New Century Celebration," was held at Jackson Federal Building where employees from twenty-five federal agencies were cited for their outstanding contributions to both federal and non-federal communities. Co-workers nominated all of the recipients for these awards. Congratulations to all!

Scholarship Awarded to Youth Volunteer

Christin Reece, an 18-year old youth American Lake volunteer, received one of three national VA Voluntary Service scholarships. Named after the first Voluntary Service Headquarters



Christin Reece

Director, the James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship acknowledges the nation's most outstanding youth volunteers.

Reece, a student at Lincoln High School in Tacoma, Washington and a third generation VA volunteer, will receive a \$5,000 scholarship. She has volunteered at the American Lake Division since she was 2 years old, assisting her mother and grandmother at special patient events. Christin plans to attend college in Colorado next fall. Congratulations Christin!

National Award Recognizes VISN 20's Achievements

At the recent National VA Consensus Congress, Thomas L. Garthwaite, MD, Deputy Under-Secretary for Health, announced that VISN 20 will receive the National Kenneth W. Kizer Quality Achievement Award (\$300,000). Timothy B. Williams, CEO of VISN 20's Northern Alliance states, "This is quite an honor, recognizing the VISN's outstanding team effort through assessment, learning, and improvement." He adds, "This award represents the shared focus and diligence of VA Puget Sound staff as part of a larger Northwest team effort."

The Consensus Conference brought together representatives from across VA; labor, management, medical staff and program directors to look at future strategic planning issues. VA Puget Sound was well represented with poster presentations by: Tom Payne, MD, Chief of Clinical Informatics; Mary Weenike, Adult Registered Care Practitioner; and Jean Laubscher, CHIPS. "Competition to present was very stiff and it was an honor for our staff to be so well represented" states Sandy Nielsen, COO.

Computerized Patient Record System Wins National Award

The Nicholas E. Davies Award brings national prominence to VA Puget Sound Health Care System, as one of two organizations to receive the award. "To be recognized on this level for our efforts is very flattering," states Tom Payne, MD, Chief of Clinical Informatics. "VA Puget Sound's Computer-Based Patient Record System [CPRS] is the first of its kind in the country, and a national model within VA," he adds. CPRS provides on-line access to providers who need to view patient medical records. It also improves patient safety and accuracy through its use of interactive communications (physician notes, prescriptions, patient allergies, test results, and video imaging) and is an effective tool for patient education. Harvard University's HMO was also named as an award recipient. The award will be presented at a ceremony later this year.

Veterans

Our family, Our friends

Adult Onset Diabetes



Frank Cardenas



Frank Cardenas did not seem to fit the profile of a diabetic, but was frequently thirsty, and tired in the afternoons. During a routine physical in 1995, he was shocked to discover that he had Type II (Adult Onset) Diabetes. Cardenas later discovered that an uncle and aunt had diabetes, and now worries that his children are at risk. He has learned to control his condition with medication, lifestyle changes, and regular follow-up visits with his care provider. He has added more fruits and vegetables to his diet, increased his exercise, and checks his blood sugar daily. "The docs here are very helpful and answer any question or concern I have about my disease," he says.

Cardenas enlisted in the US Navy in 1969 at Sangley Point Base, Cavite, in his native Phillipines. He was stationed at the Brooklyn Navy Shipyard where he served as a Mess Management Specialist in charge of the mess hall, as well as being responsible for billeting of Navy personnel. Later aboard the destroyer USS Charles P. Cecil off the coast of Vietnam, his duties included pilot rescue, fire support, medic, and loading of heavy artillery. Cardenas retired from the Navy in 1989 with the rank of Chief.

A VA Puget Sound employee since 1990, Cardenas works in Facilities Management. He is happy in his job and it shows. Everyone who comes in contact with Cardenas during the course of his workday receives a ready smile and a warm greeting. His philosophy is: "Treat others like you want to be treated. So far, no one has let me down."

Frank and his wife of 19 years, Marcelina, have two daughters, Kathryn and Maricelle.

Fit for Life

The recently opened employee fitness center at the Seattle Division is the culmination of a six-year joint endeavor by management and labor. American Lake's fitness center, which opened in the 1980's, recently received additional new equipment as well. Timothy B. Williams, CEO, states, "funding for these centers comes from a percentage of Canteen and retail store sales. He adds, "Fitness centers are just one more way that VA Puget Sound seeks to become an Employer of Choice."



Timothy B. Williams, CEO

"The Seattle fitness center is open to all employees and provides opportunities for building a fitness program to meet individual schedules and personal needs," states Dave Tostenrude, Recreational Therapist, trainer and Fitness Center Coordinator. The center is non-supervised and is available 24-hours a day. For more information, call Dave Tostenrude, (206) 277-1648, or Ellen Ferris, (206) 277-3902. The American Lake Fitness Center is open Mon-Fri, 6:00 am – 7:30am, 12 Noon – 12:40 pm, and 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm. Call Roy White at (253) 582-8440, extension 76776, for additional information.



Sandy Sawyer, AFGE

Facelift for Seattle Division Entrance

Last year, over 45,000 patients passed through the doors of VA Puget Sound, many of whom were referred from our Northern Alliance partners. A remodeling project at Seattle Division will soon enhance the main entrance and will increase seating as well as provide improved patient flow. The plan will re-engineer existing areas to increase patient privacy, create quieter, more comfortable waiting areas, and give patients and visitors quicker access to information. Areas included in the renovation are Patient Registration, Emergency Care, Patient Information, Travel Office, Agent Cashier, Telephone Operators, and Outpatient Pharmacy. Watch for more news. This project is expected to be completed in 2001.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Moving Wall

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Moving Wall will be making two stops in Washington State this year:

August 8 – 14, 2000

Hovander Park (Whatcom County) Ferndale, WA

Opening Ceremony: August 8th @ 1 pm
Information:
Francine Kincaid, (360) 6767-6717
www.whatcomclubs.org/wall.html

August 17-23, 2000

Colville Reservation
Nespelem, WA

Opening Ceremony: August 17th @ 10am
Information:
Clarence George, (509) 633-3509

(COO's Comments Continued)

Participants in the Leadership Training agree that the skills learned are of immediate benefit:

"In my 30+ years in the VA system, this is without a doubt the best training I have ever received!"

"CCLS parallels ... my MBA program, but it is more interactive. Plus the homework assignments apply directly to my job – my MBA program pales in comparison!"

"In a word? Enlightening," said another. "I now understand my mission and how it plays into the organization's mission."



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VA PUGET SOUND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

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Back Issues of VA Puget Sound News are available on the VA Puget Sound Web Site

www.Puget-Sound.med.va.gov

Additional Veterans Web Sites

American Diabetes Association
www.diabetes.org

Diabetes - The Facts
www.news.bbc.co.uk

Korean War
www.tcsaz.com/koreanwar.html

Korean War Veterans National Museum & Library
www.theforgottenvictory.org

D-Day
www.nando.net/sproject/dday/dday.html

members.tripod.com

www.dday.org

www.ddaymuseum.org

Hepatitis C Facts
www.va.gov/hepatitisc/
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/disease/hepatitis/index.htm