

VA Puget Sound

Proudly Serving
Veterans of the
Northwest

N E W S

VA Puget Sound Health Care System

• American Lake & Seattle

Summer 2001

50 Years of Caring

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Seattle 1945: World War II had ended and military personnel were pouring into the city. A strong military presence had been in the city since 1941, with one regiment occupying most of Beacon Hill. Jefferson Park had been used for rest and recreation for four years.

Veterans who needed health care in 1944 went to medical facilities at the Federal Building, and later to the Smith Tower. Dr. Alvin Thompson, one of the first African-American VA physicians, might have treated you. If you needed hospitalization, you were admitted to the US Marine Hospital, built in 1938 on the north end of Beacon Hill, now home to Amazon.com and Pacific Medical Center, or you traveled south to Portland's VA Hospital.

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Seattle Post - Intelligencer Collection
Museum of History & Industry

CEO Comments

50 Years of Change – 1951 to 2001

It was the end of World War II, Harry S. Truman was President and thousands of young servicemen and women, who would come to be known as the Greatest Generation, were back home to pick up their lives and start new jobs, new families and buy new homes.



Timothy Williams,
Chief Executive
Officer

In 1945, the Veterans Administration identified a 44-acre plat of parkland on Beacon Hill on which to raise a hospital. Ground was broken on November 18, 1948. President Truman sent the Air Force and Navy to Korea. The Seattle Veterans Hospital opened on April 15, 1951, with 348 beds and approximately 800 staff. By the time the Korean War ended in 1953, the new hospital was in much demand.

Since 1951, we have expanded our role in health care, opening a research wing in 1967. Research conducted in the past has played a part in the development of renal dialysis and nuclear medicine. In the ensuing years we have also made medical breakthroughs, including the discovery of two major genes related to Alzheimer's Disease and dementia; development of the prosthetic Seattle Foot, and we gained recognition as the first medical center performing abdominal aortic stent grafting in the Northwest.

From the 60's through the 70's, veterans returning from Viet Nam necessitated a long overdue expansion of health care services for veterans. The existing facility was renovated and a new wing opened September 25, 1985, bringing total beds

(Continued on page 8)

Quality in Action

Quality

Automation Drives New Outpatient Pharmacy

State-of-the-art computerized prescription dispensing equipment enhances the process of filling outpatient pharmacy prescriptions. Recently installed at both the American Lake and Seattle divisions, this new equipment includes a robot, which counts and places pills directly in prescription vials, thereby increasing productivity and decreasing wait times. This new technology improves accuracy by using of barcodes and computerized medication imaging. Barcodes scan computer generated prescription labels, which then triggers automation to dispense the right drug, with the right quantity for the right patient. The lot number and expiration date for each drug product dispensed are automatically recorded for each fill by the use of these barcodes. This computerized drug information can be readily retrieved in the event of a drug recall. Medication imaging allows pharmacists to obtain a computerized visual image of what the product should look like and compare it to what has actually been filled by the robot or pharmacy technician.

The pharmacy plans on using this equipment to process new prescriptions in 30 minutes or less from the time the pharmacist receives the prescription. As with any new automation, training and software interface issues take time. It may take 3-6 months to experience the ultimate improvements. To realize full benefits of this automation, patients and prescribers need to continue to use the mail for processing refills. The goal is to decrease wait times and increase efficiency. By not having patients refilling their prescriptions waiting in line with those filling new prescriptions.

The pharmacy staff is committed to improving service even more over the next several months.



Doctors, nurses and other health care providers at VA Puget Sound care about the comfort of their patients. VA led the nation when it announced that pain will be the 5th vital sign, and is as important to evaluate and treat as blood pressure, temperature, heart rate, or respirations.

The medical center has developed an educational handout on pain management rights that is given to each person admitted to the hospital. Patients should expect to have their pain evaluated on a regular basis while undergoing treatment. Patients will

be asked to rate their pain on a scale of zero (no pain) to 10 (the worst pain imaginable). The goal is to have every patient receive a pain assessment and to have his or her pain managed in a state-of-the-art method.

Patients need to know that reporting their pain is not a “bother” to staff, nor will it distract from proper treatment of their underlying disease. Unrelieved pain has negative effects such as impairing healing, increasing risk for post-operative complications, lengthening recovery time, and triggering long-term chronic conditions.

VA has taken a strong stance against pain. The most important issues are prompt reporting of pain and an expectation that every effort will be taken to manage it. It is not just a good idea - it is the right thing to do.

Second Straight Win of Kizer Quality Grant

For the second year in a row, VISN 20 has won the Kenneth W. Kizer Quality Achievement Recognition Grant. This prestigious award, which honors the dedicated work of VISN 20 staff and volunteers throughout the four-state area, includes a \$500,000 grant supporting our continuing mission to improve services for veterans.

Three award levels are possible—\$300,000, \$500,000 and \$1 million—based on overall score. VISN 20 received an honorable mention in the 1998 competition before winning a \$300,000 grant as the 2000 winner., and \$500,000 as the winner for 2001.

“I am especially proud because this indicates the alignment and vision of the front line employees who deliver care and services to veterans every day,” said Ted

Galey, M.D., network director, in a congratulations message to all his VISN 20 colleagues. “This simply does not occur without involvement and interaction at every level and in every part of the organization.”

Last year’s Kizer award has supported a number of VISN 20 initiatives, such as establishment of focus groups with patients, telephone follow-up with former patients not currently using VA health care services, purchase of high quality employee orientation software, and improvements in communications throughout facilities and the VISN as a whole.

VA Puget Sound staff and volunteers can take pride in their dedication and hard work that helped win our VISN’s second Kizer Grant. Congratulations!

Estrogen-Progesterone Improves Memory

In Healthy Older Women

Reducing hot flashes and other menopause symptoms, staving off heart disease, preventing bone loss and osteoporosis – these are major reasons that many older women take hormone replacement therapy (HRT). But can HRT also help boost mental function as the years pass?

“Probably,” says VA Puget Sound researcher Sanjay Asthana, MD, a geriatrician at the American Lake division and UW Research Associate Professor of Medicine. In a recent study, Dr. Asthana; Laura Baker, PhD; and their colleagues found that estrogen therapy improved memory in healthy older women regardless of whether or not they were also taking progesterone. This study not only adds evidence of estrogen therapy’s benefits after menopause, but also is the first to look at cognitive effects of estrogen-progesterone combinations now taken by most women on HRT. The

results were reported at the annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience in November 2000.

In their preliminary study, VA and UW researchers divided 18 healthy postmenopausal women into three groups. Each group received daily pills containing either estrogen, estrogen-progesterone, or an inactive placebo. The estrogen-progesterone combination was similar to HRT commonly prescribed for women with an intact uterus to reduce risk of estrogen-associated endometrial cancer. Neither participants nor researchers knew which patients received which pills until study results had been analyzed.

In tests of memory, attention and language, the women’s overall mental functioning was assessed at the beginning of the study, then during treatment at 4, 8, and 12 weeks, and again 8 weeks following termination of treatment. Compared with

the placebo group, the team found both verbal and visual-spatial memory improved for women who received estrogen, whether or not it was given with progesterone. Improvements in these forms of memory are associated with meaningful gains in certain daily activities, Asthana notes. Visual-spatial memory, for example, helps people remember a previously taken route.

A larger study is needed to confirm the findings, Asthana cautions, “but given that most women on replacement therapy are taking estrogen-progesterone combinations, our results are very encouraging.”

Nurse-Driven
Interventional Technology

Tim Royer, RN;
Cathie Hasemann, RN
and Gary Evers, RN

Patients who require long term intravenous (IV) access often have a peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC) placed.

Until recently, these catheters were placed by the Interventional Radiology department. Utilizing relatively new technology for nurses such as micro-introducers and venous ultrasound, the IV team is now placing PICC lines at the patient bedside. This has allowed radiology staff to concentrate on more intense procedures, removed the need to transport critically ill patients, and also achieved a substantial cost savings. The IV team is now mentoring other IV teams in the community on this new technology.

SCI Recreational Therapy Award

The Recreation Therapy Program of the SCI Center of Excellence at VA Puget Sound Health Care System is the 2001 recipient of the Washington State Therapeutic Recreation Association’s Outstanding Program. Implemented by Dave Tostenrude, CTRS, and Carrie Booker, CTRS, this program represents the original therapeutic recreation service model, treatment, education and leisure participation, successfully leading individuals with disabilities through the continuum from treatment through education and into participation with about a 98% success rate for participants leading healthy leisure lifestyles. Dave and Carrie have been highly innovative in

creating partnerships with community and veteran’s service organizations to physically, emotionally and financially support the program’s vision and mission.

They have broken many societal boundaries through organizing integrative recreational opportunities using ordinary community recreational events, such as the Seattle-to-Portland bicycle ride and the Ridge-to-River in Wenatchee. These activities not only assist the participants in therapy and community transition, but they also educate the community.

For more information call
(206) 277-1648

IN THE NEWS

Stamping Out Diabetes

King County Executive Ron Sims joined VA Puget Sound Health Care System CEO Timothy B. Williams, Seattle Postmaster Katherine Nash and representatives of the American Diabetes Association in a ceremony celebrating the national first day issue of the new first-class 34-cent stamp dedicated to diabetes awareness.



Timothy Williams, Katherine Nash, Gordon Starkebaum, MD

Stamp Honors Veterans

The "Honoring Veterans, Continuing to Serve" 34 cent, first-class commemorative stamp was unveiled nationally in Washington, DC on May 23rd. The Seattle Post Office kicked off a local stamp dedication on May 24th at VA Puget Sound Health Care System. Performing the second-day unveiling were Katherine Nash, Seattle Postmaster; Timothy B. Williams, CEO, VA Puget Sound; and Barbara Hatred, Director of Voluntary Services for VA Puget Sound, assisted by members from the different service branches.



Roberta Wiegmann, Program Support Assistant and Timothy Williams

Excellence in Nursing

On May 8th, in a Washington, DC ceremony, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi honored Bonnie Steele, RN, PhD, for her expanded role in providing leadership in clinical practice and education as the Respiratory Clinical Nurse Specialist working with patients who have chronic pulmonary disease. Steele was one of four national recipients of the Secretary's Award for Excellence in Nursing; she is the fourth recipient of this prestigious award from VA Puget Sound. Past awards recipients include Margarethe Cammermeyer, RN, PhD (1982); Virginia Scott, RN (1995); Linda Haas RN (1999). The award recognizes Steele's outstanding achievement in nursing and service as a respiratory clinical nurse specialist. Dr. Steele's success in improving care is reflected in the numerous articles she has published, her role as a lecturer, nurse educator, faculty member at three nursing schools, as well the numerous letters from patients and families whose lives she has touched.



Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Anthony Principi; Bonnie Steele, RN, PhD; Dr. Thomas Garthwaite, VA Under Secretary for Health

William Booth Center Expands Services to Homeless Veterans



Alan Castle, Dave Hamilton, David Clitheroe, Marty Kaplan

The Salvation Army, in partnership with the Veterans' Administration, is expanding its services to veterans and other homeless men. The cooperative effort will result in thirty additional beds for veterans as well as other program space on William Booth Center premises, including classrooms for life-skills instruction, work space for medical staff, laundry facilities and amenities most people take for granted: a place to shower and shave. Sixty-five percent of the \$1.3 million cost is being paid through the Department of Veterans Affairs and is expected to be completed by June 2002.

Get Ready to Cycle



The Seattle to Portland Bicycle Classic will be held July 7th and 8th. More than 15 veterans with physical disabilities from the Spinal Cord Injury Unit (SCI) and

Rehabilitation Care Service (RCS) will participate. This is a VA-wide opportunity to educate the community on accessibility, as well as demonstrate VA's commitment to supporting veterans. We are looking for volunteers, cyclists and non-cyclists alike, to staff this event. Last year, VA Puget Sound participated with a team of nine veterans from SCI/RCS and fourteen staff members who either rode with the veterans or staffed support vehicles. For more information, call Dave Tostenrude at the Seattle division, (206) 277-1648.

Distinguished Career Award



*Dr. Thomas V. Holohan and
Loretta Wasse, CRNA, MEd*

Loretta Wasse, CRNA, MEd, served as a clinician, researcher, educator, mentor/coach and executive in her twenty-one years with VHA. She joined VA in 1980 and retired February 2, 2001. However, she worked as a graduate CRNA for a total of 41 years in various practice

settings. Loretta states "I loved my work at the VA because I found giving anesthesia care to veterans was extremely interesting and challenging," adding "throughout my career, teaching has been a major function, which I have thoroughly enjoyed." In 1987, she was given the responsibility of setting up a six-week anesthesia clinical and didactic rotation for eight University of Washington dental residents a year. She became the first deputy director of headquarters Anesthesia Service on August 21, 1994 and remained until retirement in February. After the appointment in 1994, her clinical/teaching and headquarters responsibilities became equally divided. She made tremendous contributions to the VA during her career and leaves behind a great legacy. She is currently working with the headquarters Pain Management Steering Committee as a volunteer.

New EEO Manager

VA Puget Sound Health Care System is pleased to announce the selection of the new Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Manager, Ms. Valerie (Val) Simmons. Congratulations Val!

Kelly Added to VHA's National Group

Don Kelly, program specialist with the Office of Human Resources at VA Puget Sound Health Care System, was recently appointed by the Department of Veterans Affairs to serve a four-year term on the VHA Human Resource Management Advisory Group (HRMAG). Don will be one of twelve members representing Medical Center and VISN human resource perspectives at the national level. Issues under discussion by the group include workforce planning, succession planning, and replacement of certain regulations, work/life programs and the establishment of "Best Practices."



Don Kelly

15th National Disabled Veterans

Winter Sports Clinic

March 25-30 brought together ten veterans from VA Puget Sound when they attended the 15th National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic at Snowmass Village near Aspen, Colorado. The Sports clinic actively promotes the development of healthy lifestyles for veterans with physical disabilities. For those veterans attending, instruction was received in adaptive sports including Alpine and Nordic skiing, rock climbing and scuba diving. This year's event was the largest to date, with over 400 veterans participating. A truly amazing experience for those who attended and for the staff who participated. For more information contact Dave Tostenrude, Recreational Therapy at (206) 277-1648.

Getting Ready for Summer...

Use Good Sun Sense

As we head into summer and spend more time outdoors enjoying family, friends, and activities, the sun we longed for during the winter is upon us. Even in the Northwest where we have our share of overcast days, those rays are getting through and can cause skin damage.

That does not mean you must avoid the sun all the time. In fact, a little sun helps you stay healthy. We need the sun to make active vitamin D for healthy bones and teeth. But 10 to 15 minutes of sunlight most days is all anyone needs.

Good sun sense means making smart choices about when you are in the sun and for how long. Consider these tips to protect yourself in the sun:

- Avoid the sun when the sun's rays are strongest: between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. (or between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. during daylight savings hours).
- Watch out for reflected sun. Snow, sand, concrete, and water all bounce harmful rays.
- Protect yourself even if it is not sunny. Ultraviolet (UV) rays can make their way through haze, light fog and low clouds.
- Stay out of tanning salons. Many tanning devices emit high levels of UV rays.
- Use sunscreens to lower your risk of skin cancer.
- Use a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher to block both UV-A and UV-B rays. If you burn easily, use a sunscreen with a SPF of 30 or higher.
- For water activities, use sports sunscreens that do not wash off easily, and reapply sunscreen every two to three hours.
- Choose sunglasses that block most UV light.

Enjoy those lazy days of summer, be good to your skin, and use that Sun Sense!

Check out the following websites for more information
www.health.com
www.emedicine.com

50 Years of Caring

The History of VA Puget Sound Health Care System

In 1945, the city of Seattle deeded 44 acres on Beacon Hill for a new veterans hospital. This paralleled the GI Bill, and was the first time that the government committed to taking care of veterans. The Seattle Times ran a front page story of this news.

Seattle, 1951: The Korean War was raging. Pier 36 was the entry point for returning military personnel from Korea. Construction was completed for Seattle's VA Hospital, the 27th in the nation. From its inception, Seattle VA was affiliated with the University of Washington School of Medicine.

The hospital, clearly visible from downtown,

was dedicated on April 15, 1951. With the courtyard in front of the building full of spectators, a five-member honor guard representing veterans service organizations raised the flag. Cecil Rhinphaa, the only female member of the honor guard, represented the women's auxiliary. Joseph Feldman, representing the American Legion, is one of today's longest serving volunteers at the Seattle division. Sixteen veterans organizations participated.

In his address, Carl R. Gray, administrator of the Veterans Administration, said, "It is an abiding obligation that we must never lose sight that this hospital shall

ever be devoted to the service of those men and women who offered themselves to the nation in her time of distress." Also present were Senator Warren G. Magnuson, Mayor William F. Devin, and Donald E. Nolan, MD, the first director of the hospital.

In 1951, doctors wore uniforms; intensive care units did not exist; Penicillin was the antibiotic of the day, and nurses were in short supply. In 2001, a greater emphasis is on outpatient care. Doctors no longer wear uniforms. Intensive care units, born in the '60's, now treat special acute care needs. Penicillin is now just one of hundreds of antibiotics used to target specific infections. The one constant in the past fifty years is: nurses are still in short supply.



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Youth Volunteer Wins National Scholarship



April Cross

April Cross, a 17-year-old youth volunteer at the American Lake division, was recently honored with a \$6,000 scholarship by the James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship Award Foundation, which provides approximately five scholarships annually to students who volunteer at VA medical centers throughout the nation. April is a student at Clover Park High School and is involved in many school activities, including ROTC, in addition to volunteering at the VA. Her goal is to use the scholarship to pursue a career in computer science. Congratulations, April, and thank you for your contributions to caring for our veteran patients!



VA Staff Honor Volunteers

The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution declaring 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers. In keeping with that decree, VA Puget Sound Health Care System took its volunteers on a 2001 Space Odyssey, an adventure where no volunteer had gone before! Captain Tim Williams and 1st Officer Sandy Nielsen, along with a special outer-space appearance by "Flash" Gordon Starkebaum, captivated an audience of 450 VA volunteers and guests with comedy and song. Thirty-four talented VA Puget Sound Health Care System staff, under the direction of Sandy Blanz, Voluntary Service Specialist, joined our management team to honor volunteers. During the past fiscal year, 1,127 volunteers served 168,000 hours, with veterans service organizations and individuals contributing over \$356,768 in cash and in-kind donations. Thanks to our American Lake and Seattle VOLUNTEERS! YOU ARE THE BEST!

Alliance of American Veterans Donates Van

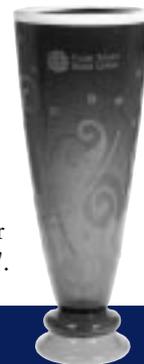
VA Puget Sound takes pride in providing great customer service, whether its a ride from the parking lot or the clinical health care experience. In support of our efforts to serve veterans and visitors, the Alliance of American Veterans (ALL VETS) donated a 2001 Ford Windstar. The van, driven by VA Puget Sound volunteers, will be used as a courtesy parking lot shuttle for the Seattle division.



Marion Wagoner, Donna Botelho, Timothy Williams, John Becker and Gary Dunn.

Partners in Life Community Service Award

VA Puget Sound and the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), Union Local 3197, were honored by the Puget Sound Blood Center earlier this year at a ceremony in downtown Seattle celebrating the Partners in Life Community Service Award. VA Puget Sound has held blood drives for nearly twenty years, annually registering over 400 donors. That is 20% more than any other hospital in the Puget Sound region. Thanks to AFGE local 3197 for all their hard work in making the blood drives such a success. When you give blood, you give the gift of life. For more information on the next blood drive, call Rudy Kollar at Ext. 62737.



Building 61 Receives A New Look

Since opening in 1924, mental health has been a key program at the American Lake division of VA Puget Sound. While the approach to treatment of the mentally ill has significantly changed since the 1920s, moving from inpatient service delivery to outpatient based programming, our dedication to working with veterans and their families has not.

Reflective of this change in treatment focus, Building 61, a former inpatient unit, has undergone a complete renovation to house all of the Mental Health outpatient programs. The \$6 million project involved four stages, including a new access road and 120-car parking lot. The architectural firm of Mills, John and Rigdon (MJR), working with Mental Health, created an environment that as one patient put it "is inviting but says this is a place to work on your problems". A formal open house for this facility is planned for July 6, 2001 at 1:30 pm.

Congressman Adam Smith *Addresses Employee Issues*



Congressman Adam Smith and
Deborah Stako, AFGE 1st Vice President

Congressman Adam Smith appeared at the Seattle Division on April 11, 2001 for a town forum sponsored by the Legislative Committee of AFGE Local 3197. Congressman Smith addressed issues and answered questions that pertained to Federal Employment with the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center. These issues included contracting out (TRAC Act), pay disparities and better medical coverage. AFGE Local 3197's Legislative Committee is working to provide future town forums. For more information, contact Rudy Kollar at Ext. 62737.

Employee Celebrations on the Horizon

This years Employee Appreciation Picnic will feature a celebration of VA Puget Sound Seattle division's 50TH Anniversary.

When: Seattle – September 6th,
American Lake – September 21st

Historical Displays - Sock Hop –
Music - Dancing - Food - Fun, Fun,
Fun!!! Be there or be square!

(CMO Comments continued from page 1)

to 488, with staff upwards of 1600, to serve more than 430,000 veterans in Western Washington. The new wing brought the first VA Spinal Cord Injury Unit to the Northwest, the capability to perform cardiac surgery and the first VA Nursing Home Care facility in metropolitan Seattle. The capacity for the only Bone Marrow Transplant Program in the VA increased from 4-6 beds.

In March of 1995, Seattle integrated with American Lake to become VA Puget Sound Health Care System. Today, it has over 3000 staff and 1300 volunteers. Over 670,000 veterans currently reside in Washington. The role of technology in medicine has provided new opportunities for improving health care. Telemedicine, Computerized Patient Record Systems and Pharmacy Bar Code Administration all provide greater patient safety. New community based outpatient clinics allow us to deliver healthcare to veterans over vast distances. Much has changed in the past 50 years, but our commitment to bringing quality health care to veterans remains strong.

Community Based Out-patient Clinic Opening

Congressional approval was recently received for a Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Bremerton. If everything goes as planned, we anticipate opening in late summer 2001. The new CBOC will join existing locations in King County which include Shoreline and beginning this summer, Federal Way. VA's outreach activities in the Bremerton area have regularly exceeded capacity and a large number of veterans travel the distance already to receive care at the American Lake and Seattle divisions. Veterans have long requested a VA presence in the area and the new CBOC has strong support from Veterans Service Organizations including the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars. The CBOC will provide primary care and mental health services. A telemedicine program will be established at the clinic to link providers with specialists as needed for consultation. Patients requiring additional specialty services referred to American Lake and Seattle divisions of VA Puget Sound Health Care System.

Breast Cancer 3–Day Walk

The American Cancer Society reports that over 180,000 women in the US will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, and over 40,000 will die. Breast cancer, the most common form of cancer in women in the US, is the leading cause of death among women between the ages of 40 and 55.

This August, Avon is sponsoring a 3-day, 60-mile walk from Enumclaw to Seattle in which over 3500 people are expected to participate. A number of VA Puget Sound employees will take part in this huge community event to raise money for medical research, advocacy training, community-based breast health programs, and a national assistance program for medically underserved women.

For more information on applying or sites of other Avon 3-day walks, visit the web site: www.breastcancer3day.org, or call toll free 1-(888) 332-9286.



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.

VA PUGET SOUND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

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