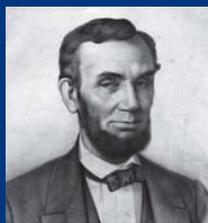




Commemorating 75 Years of Service

This year, VA celebrates its 75th anniversary when the U.S. Veterans Bureau, the National Homes for Disabled Soldiers, and the Bureau of Pensions were consolidated into a stand alone organization. There were already fifty-four VA Hospitals in 1930 when President Herbert Hoover signed the law creating the Veterans Administration. Today, the agency known as the Department of Veteran Affairs, is the federal government's second largest cabinet level agency. The United States has the most comprehensive system of veterans' healthcare and benefits in the world. The roots of this system go back hundreds of years.

- In 1636 disabled veterans of the Indian Wars from Plymouth Colony were the first veterans to receive pensions. Land grants were awarded to soldiers who served to the completion of the Revolutionary War.
- In 1812 the Naval Home in Philadelphia was the first facility to provide medical care to disabled veterans. After the Civil War only Union soldiers were eligible for veterans' benefits. (In 1958 Congress pardoned Confederate soldiers, and the one remaining survivor of the Confederate Army received a pension.) In 1862 Arlington National Cemetery was established.
- In 1865 President Lincoln called on Congress "to care for him who shall have borne the battle for his widow and his orphan." VA later adopted this as its motto.



continued on page 12

The Call to Service

With the recent hurricanes, I had become accustomed to more news of disaster. At first, the news seemed too much to believe. However, as a day passed and then another day, word of heroes began to filter out like a ray of light.



*Timothy B. Williams,
Director*

I wondered again at the miracle of the American Spirit and the "call to duty" that so many of our friends and co-workers exhibit. Within the VA system, we weave together a family that looks out for one and other. We work side by side with individuals who quietly devote their lives to helping those in need. We have staff who have worked with the poor, with the homeless and mentally ill who have already gone and returned from working with refugees from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Those who in the past, have responded to natural disasters around the world. I am proud that we have employees who are so committed, that they volunteer and work with national and international helping organizations.

When tragedy strikes we all must pull together and offer understanding not only to those in need, but also to each other. We must remember how much each of us has and be thankful for all that we can give in this time of need.

Communities across the nation have mobilized efforts to support the victims of natural disasters like the recent hurricanes. As part of that momentum, VAPuget Sound is beginning the 2005 Combined Federal Campaign early to provide an avenue for those employees who would like to contribute to agencies supporting the relief effort now. You will be receiving information that outlines examples of those agencies involved with CFC, that are involved in relief programs. We look forward to another year success in supporting our communities through the CFC.

Quality in

Why a Secure Electronic Patient Record Makes Sense...

The recent hurricanes destroyed or left inaccessible the medical records of untold numbers of people. One VA oncologist evacuated flooded New Orleans clutching a laptop computer with some patients' records; another threw some paper charts in her truck on the way out, according to The Associated Press. Even though the New Orleans VA Medical Center flooded, electronic medical records for 50,000 patients of that hospital and surrounding veterans' outpatient clinics survived. A Department of Veterans Affairs computer specialist was airlifted from New Orleans carrying backup tapes of all the records, which by the next night had been re-entered into computers in Houston. As an example, a records chief for the South-Central VA Healthcare Network, said his office put patient prescriptions and other data tracked at a separate location onto a secure web site as an interim solution.



New Orleans VA Medical Center and Hurricane Katrina

International Health Exchange Continues



VA Puget Sound is often touted as a leader in health care innovations, but rarely does the international health care community think of turning to VA to learn about creative leadership. Recently, a group of senior health care executives from England's National Health Service Primary Care Trust visited with us to learn more about problem solving, creating thinking and our national system of health care delivery. They were most impressed with our integrated team approach to health care: our focus on patient safety, customer service and our computerized patient record. The group heard from staff from various Service Lines, such as Health Plan Management, Financial Management Service, Health Information Management Service, and staff involved in Action Learning, on broad topics covering veteran eligibility for care, funding of veteran health care programs, the computerized patient record system, and tools for improving the quality of worklife for staff.

“What we have learned from them during prior exchanges is that an action learning approach enables staff to focus on problem solving in a positive manner and to achieve balance in their worklife. This kind of mental clarity promotes self confidence and the ability to be open to others in the organization.” States Mary Hampton RN and Exchange Representative.

2005 Satisfaction Surveys

Why do we survey our employees and patients for satisfaction?

We conduct satisfaction surveys in a confidential way to ask "How are we doing?" The survey results provide a window as to how both employees and patients perceive our organization. The results tell us not only what is working well, but where there may be opportunities for improvement. We run the All Employees Survey (AES) every two to three years. The Survey of Healthcare Experiences of Patients (SHEP) for both inpatients and outpatients is a random sample survey that we conduct monthly.

The survey results tell us if there is a relationship between how well employees function as a workgroup, and whether our patients are satisfied. The way we treat each other has a spillover effect on the experience of patients. It shows that civility among employees, such as treating each other with respect, knowing that they can rely on each other, resolving disputes fairly, and embracing a spirit of cooperation and teamwork has a positive relationship with patient satisfaction scores. Recent VA Puget Sound survey results for both employee workgroup scores and inpatient and outpatient satisfaction scores for Overall Quality scored higher than the VA national average score.

2005 Survey of VA Enrollee's Use of VA Health Care

The Department of Veterans Affairs has hired a company by the name of ORC Macro to conduct a national patient survey on the use of health care. Surveys will be conducted with enrolled veterans by calling veterans at home. The survey is random, which means not all enrolled veterans will be contacted.

Calls are being made across the country to patients' homes, asking how many times they've been to a VA over the past year. The calls are legitimate. The survey continues through November 30th of this year.

Some frequently asked questions about the survey:

1. Who is doing this survey?

- VA - The Department of Veteran's Affairs, Veteran's Health Care Administration is the sponsor of the survey.
- VA hired ORC Macro, and independent research company, to conduct all of the telephone interviewing.

2. How long is the survey?

- The survey is approximately 12- 15 minutes in length.

3. What is the purpose of the survey?

- The purpose of the survey is to gather information from veterans about the veteran's health insurance, use of VA and non-VA health care facilities, general health status, and some demographic information.

4. What's the Survey about? What sorts of questions are there on it?

- Veterans' health insurance
- Veterans' medications/prescriptions they use and where they purchase them,
- How often they used VA or non-VA health care facilities in 2004
- Their reasons for using VA health care services,
- General health status
- When they served in the military, and
- Demographics.
- The survey is voluntary and all information is confidential.

ORC MACRO

Macro International Inc. | AN OPINION RESEARCH CORPORATION COMPANY

VA Gives Thanks To RollX Company for Community Service and Support of Veterans

"We consider it an honor to be able to help these heroes that have sacrificed so much for our country."

Below is a basic outline of the Rollx "Wounded Warrior" program:

This program is set up for soldiers/marines from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. A newly injured soldier/marine does not receive their grant that would modify a vehicle for their needs until they are discharged. This process can take several months from when a soldier/marine leaves the VA hospital. (Rollx Vans has had involvement with close to 100 VA chiefs, assistants, and staff. All are devoted and dedicated to helping the veteran in the process - some valiantly so).

This is an on going program for all of 2005, if there is a waiting list, the vehicles will be provided on a first come basis. A recipient may use the vehicle until they receive their own modified van for up to 6 months at no charge.

The vehicle can be driven 2,000 miles per month. The goal of this program is to reach the most deserving soldier/marine in areas where we can provide the most benefit.

For more information:
www.rollxvans.com



Two of VA's newly returning veterans of Iraq have received RollX vans. Top: Purple Heart recipient John R. Bennet, Montana National Guard. Bottom: Branden Powell, Stryker Brigade

Making a difference

Making a Difference

American Ex-Prisoners of War



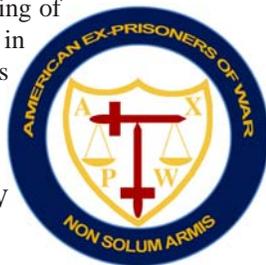
Jim Wells, AXPOW Tacoma Chapter Commander

The American Ex-Prisoners of War (AXPOW) organization was founded in 1942 as a national organization for American citizens who were captured by enemy forces. Their stated purpose is: "to help those who cannot help themselves." AXPOW has helped thousands affected by their capture, deal with the trauma through friendship of those who shared a common experience.

Jim Wells is the Tacoma Chapter Commander. Mr. Wells served his country during WWII in the Army Air Force. He was captured on May 28th, 1944 at Dessau, Germany and released on May 2nd, 1945 at Luttow, Germany. He retired from the military in 1973 and has been a member of the AXPOW since 1985.

Members of local Seattle, Tacoma AXPOW chapters volunteer thousands of hours at VA Puget Sound. They work in many areas of the hospital including the long-term care facility, chapel, information desk, and blind rehabilitation woodshop. Through April of this year, local chapters have donated over \$10,000 to our Patient Welfare Fund. This group of veterans supports the building of the Fisher House and is actively involved in securing operating and construction funds for the project.

To find out more information or learn how to become a member, visit the AXPOW website: www.axpow.org



The Power of Purpose

A popular magazine (The New Yorker) once did a series about "The Power of Purpose." It seems that this topic is always timely and perhaps especially now. What are some of the personal philosophies of many of our co-workers who come to work with a positive attitude each day, irrespective of stresses and strains? Where do these people get their inspiration for demonstrating love and dedication daily and enriching the lives of patients and staff around them?

Here are some personal philosophies of people we work with here at VA Puget Sound. Sherri Bauch, working for VACO while stationed locally, was viewed by many employees as exhibiting a consistent positive and helping attitude and her thoughts are included here. Sherri has moved on to live and work in Washington DC at VACO where she is now Staff Assistant to the Chief of Staff. Thank you Sherri!

Sherri Bauch: *I think that being positive is a learned behavior. Positive thinking comes from one's beliefs and values. I am here as a piece of a system, whether it is a family system or work system, or the human race. I am not here just to survive. I have a purpose. What is my purpose in life? My purpose is to make a difference. I choose to be grateful that I have a job. I choose not to be unhappy, ungrateful or not a part of the system. If I am excited about what I am doing and if I have a clear view of what my purpose is, e.g. I work at the VA and can have an impact on others in a positive way, then this is my mission and my purpose. I feel that what I am doing is my purpose at this point even though it evolves and changes through time. It gets me up in the morning and is a roadmap for my life.*

Anonymous: *I enjoy the administrative side of health care and I feel that this is critical to contributing to veterans' health. It is like giving something back for me being healthy. It means so much to me to see a smile on the veteran's face and to make the veteran feel good. I try to always treat people the way I would want to be treated. When I read the mission and the goals of the organization, I see powerful statements. I take them all to heart and these guide me each day.*

Anonymous: *I have a choice every morning when I get out of bed. I choose to be happy. I choose not to let someone else's bad day ruin mine. I choose to hang out with happy, positive people.*

Veterans Service Organizations



The organizations below are chartered by Congress and/or recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs for claim representation. Many other non-chartered and national and state veterans service organizations exist, but unfortunately there is not enough space here to include them all. From time to time, VA Puget Sound News will profile one or more of these organizations and its impact on veterans as part of the 75th anniversary celebration of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Air Force Sergeants Association
American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor
American Ex-Prisoners of War
American GI Forum of the United States
American Gold Star Mothers, Inc.
American Red Cross
American War Mothers
AMVETS (American Veterans)
Armed Forces Services Corporation
Army and Navy Union, USA, Inc.
Blinded Veterans Association
Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.
Catholic War Veterans, USA, Inc.
Congressional Medal of Honor Society of the USA
Disabled American Veterans
Fleet Reserve Association
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.
Italian American War Veterans of the USA
Jewish War Veterans of the USA
Legion of Valor of the USA, Inc.
Marine Corps League
Military Chaplains Association of the USA
Military Order of the Purple Heart of the USA, Inc.

National Amputation Foundation, Inc.
National Association for Black Veterans, Inc.
National Association of County Veterans Service Officers, Inc.
National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA)
National Veterans Legal Services Program, Inc.
Navy Club of the United States of America
Navy Mutual Aid Association
Non Commissioned Officers Association
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, Inc.
Polish Legion of American Veterans, USA
Swords to Plowshares: Veterans Rights Organization
The American Legion
The Retired Enlisted Association
US Submarine Veterans of World War II
Veterans Assistance Foundation, Inc.
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc.
Veterans of World War I of the USA, Inc.
Vietnam Veterans of America
Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II
Women's Army Corps Veterans Association

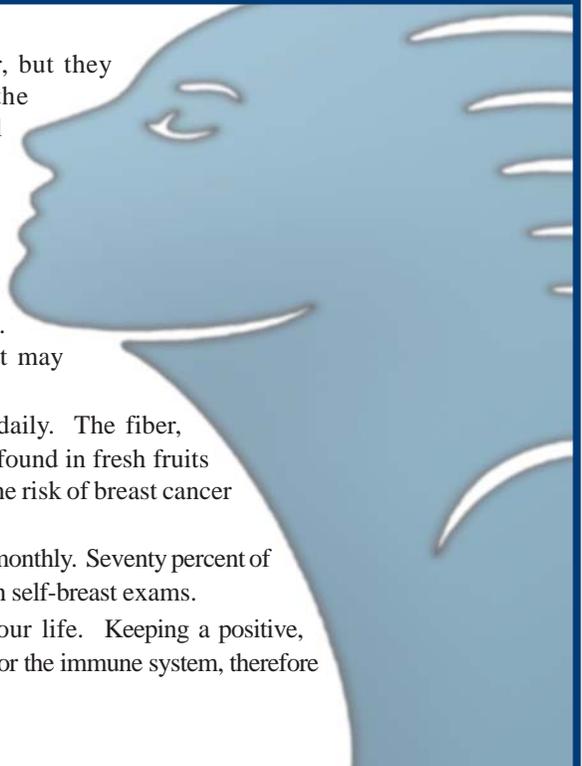
VA Offers Tips for National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The chance that a woman will be diagnosed with breast cancer over her lifetime is 1 in 8. However, many men are diagnosed with breast cancer, too. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) continues conducting research into breast cancer to discover potential causes and to develop better diagnostics and treatments for this disease.

Mammograms every year for women aged 40-70, especially for high-risk women who have had a first-degree relative diagnosed with breast cancer, are encouraged in order to help detect breast cancer at the earliest and most treatable stages. However, a VA study urges discreet use of mammograms for women older than 70, as the radiation exposure from mammograms may outweigh the potential benefits for elderly women in very poor health.

Mammograms may detect cancer, but they do not prevent cancer. While the causes of breast cancer are still unknown, here are a few tips that may help reduce the risk of developing the disease:

- Don't smoke, exercise regularly, and maintain a healthy weight. Studies show that excess weight may increase the risk of breast cancer.
- Eat fresh fruits and vegetables daily. The fiber, antioxidants, and other nutrients found in fresh fruits and vegetables may help reduce the risk of breast cancer and some other cancers.
- Conduct self-breast examinations monthly. Seventy percent of all breast cancers are found through self-breast exams.
- Reduce the negative stress in your life. Keeping a positive, relaxed outlook may be beneficial for the immune system, therefore reducing the risk of some diseases.



Breakthroughs in Medicine

Your Life, Your Choices

There is only one person who is truly qualified to tell a health care provider how you feel about different health care issues - and that's you. But, what if you get sick or injured so severely that you can't communicate with your doctors or family members? Have you thought about what kind of medical care you want? Do your loved ones and health care providers know your wishes?

You can help ensure that your wishes will direct future health care decisions through the process of advance care planning.

At VA Puget Sound Health Care System, you may get further information and the necessary forms by contacting the Social Work Office:

American Lake Division:
(253)582-8440

Seattle Division:
(206) 764-2646

Advance Care Planning

You can complete two forms about your choices for future medical care: a Living Will and a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care. These forms are commonly called Advance Directives. You can complete these forms at any time, but it is especially useful to do this when you are healthy.

A Living Will tells your doctor what medical care you want or don't want at times when you can't speak for yourself. This form is about your health care wishes, not about your property or finances.

The Durable Power of Attorney for

Health Care (DPAHC) allows you to name a person to make health care decisions if you are too sick to understand and to decide for yourself. The DPAHC is only used after a doctor has determined that you cannot make decisions.

If you have not named someone to speak for you, the doctor will try to find someone to speak for you. At VA, the doctor will ask people in this order:

- Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care (DPAHC)
- Court Appointed Guardian
- Spouse
- Adult Child
- Parent
- Adult Sibling
- Grandparent
- Close Friend

If you wish to amend, destroy or revoke your Advance Directive:

- Tell your doctor or health care staff about your desire to make changes
- Complete a new form
- Destroy all copies of the old Advance Directives

You may have heard about a POLST (Physician's Order for Life-Sustaining Treatments)

The Physician's Order for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) is a bright green Washington State form. Your doctor completes and signs these orders to help others respond to emergencies according to your wishes, when you are at home. The POLST form does not replace an Advance Directive.

Research Studies

Operation Iraqi Freedom

Operation Enduring Freedom

VA Puget Sound has taken an aggressive role in responding to the needs and expectations of our newest generation of veterans. Some of the more comprehensive research includes:

Mental Health: PTSD

Drs. Murray Raskind, Elaine Peskind, Charles Thompson and Cyrus Zabetian are conducting a series of studies on the use of Prazosin in treatment of nightmares related to combat-induced PTSD. Collaborating institutions include the Madigan Army Medical Center (Tacoma).

Drs. Andrew Saxon and Tracy Simpson study relationships between PTSD and alcohol and drug abuse as well as the Prevalence of Disorders of Extreme Stress Among Veterans in Outpatient Mental Health Care among others.

Rehabilitation, Amputation, Prosthetics

Drs. Bruce Sangeorzan, Joseph Czerniecki and Glenn Klute at VA Puget Sound's Center of Excellence in Limb Loss Prevention and Prosthetic Engineering are conducting numerous studies relevant to the needs of returning veterans with leg amputations. They are developing collaborative studies with DOD and investigators at Walter Reed. Including a VA Center of Excellence in Limb Loss Prevention and Prosthetic Engineering, identification of the Appropriate Standardized Outcome Measure of Physical Function, and the development of Powered Prosthetic Limb among others.

Dr. Rhonda Williams is conducting a CDC-sponsored study to develop models that predict health outcomes, describe the nature of social support, and identify strategies used to obtain, enhance or utilize social support following limb loss.

Spinal Cord Injury

Dr. Margaret Hammond is Director of a Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) program for spinal cord injury. This program supports, enhances and integrates the translation of research into improved comprehensive outcomes (including health and quality of life) for veterans with spinal cord injuries.

Feedback

Milton, WA

Dear Mr. Williams,

This is tardy, but I just want to tell you about the "way beyond duty" quality of the people working in your hospital. Through an unfortunate set of circumstances, I was left stranded on the sidewalk about 1 ½ blocks downhill from the Spinal Cord Injury entrance of the VA medical center. I have an old manual wheelchair and I have no cell phone. And, I weigh well over 200 lbs. Needless to say; I was extremely stranded and totally distressed.

A young woman came by and asked if I needed help. I explained the circumstances and this small young woman actually pushed me up to the top of the hill to the entrance. I was so distraught I didn't think to get a name. But, she would be easy to spot; there is a halo over her head and she's a lot stronger than she looks!

Sincerely,

Happy Veteran
Milton, WA.

Dear Mr. Williams:

To all you wonderful people at VA Seattle:

My wife and I would like to express our sincere appreciation and thanks for al yourhard work and dedication you do day in and day out. You made my heart cath procedure an experience I will never forget, ALL positive!! I'm a nut shell and we thank God for this country and all of you.

God Bless
In Nampa Idaho

Dear Mr. Williams:

I have been a patient at your hospital since November of 2004, receiving expended care for injury to both my knees from two falls at home. I am now in the transitional care unit and look forward to gong home soon to my wife.

My journey to recovery has been slow and tedious. However, I am encouraged by my graduation from bed to wheelchair and walker due to the splendid physical therapy given to me over many sessions by Meg Sablinsky. I feel fortunate indeed in having her company and counsel. I think that she deserves a star in her record for the care that she has devoted to my recovery.

Sincerely Yours,
Seattle, WA.

VA Medical Research and Development Milestones

At the end of World War II, VA became a major force in American medicine, particularly within research and development. Since that time, VA researchers have consistently ranked at the top of health research and medical breakthroughs. Here are some milestones:

1946 - Developed and tested effective therapies for tuberculosis following World War II. Multi-center clinical trials led to development of the Cooperative Studies Program, which has since produced effective treatments for disease and conditions including schizophrenia, diabetes, depression, heart disease, and stroke.

Established the standard for developing better-fitting, lighter artificial limbs through studies of human locomotion, enhanced surgical techniques, and modernized design and manufacturing methods.

1947 - Introduced the first mobility and orientation rehabilitation-training program for blind persons.

1958 - Invented the implantable cardiac pacemaker, helping many patients prevent

potentially life-threatening complications from irregular heartbeats.

1960 - Pioneered the concepts that led to development of computerized axial tomography (CAT scan).

1961 - Conducted groundbreaking work with radioisotopes that led to development of modern radioimmunoassay diagnostic techniques.

1968 - Performed the first successful liver transplants and developed techniques for suppressing the body's natural attempt to reject transplanted tissue.

1970 - Expanded understanding of how brain hormones interact with the endocrine system.

1977 - Andrew V. Schally, a VA researcher and faculty member at Tulane University in New Orleans, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine for his work on the isolation, identification, synthesis, and clinical application of hypothalamic hormones.

Rosalyn Yalow received the Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine. Her work included finding ways to use radioisotopes

in medicine, and in particular, developing with other scientists a way to measure the amount of proteins like insulin in the body.

1984 - Developed the nicotine patch and other therapies to help smokers give up the habit.

1989 - Invented a computer system that provides patients on ventilators with more accurate respirator settings, fewer medical complications, and better patient outcomes.

1990 - Contributed to development of the first standards for wheelchair prescriptions.

1991 - Developed Functional Electrical Stimulation (FES) systems that allowed patients to move paralyzed limbs.

Demonstrated that early treatment with corticosteroids reduces damage from spinal cord injury.

1993 - Developed and tested a new device that led to improved wheelchair designs by enhancing assessments of upper extremity pain in manual wheelchair users.

1994 - Demonstrated that one aspirin tablet

Healthwise National Cholesterol Education Month

High cholesterol affects Americans of all ages and sizes. Although cholesterol is needed by our bodies to create healthy cells, Vitamin D and certain hormones, too much cholesterol clogs the blood vessels. This condition can slow down and even stop blood flow, enhancing the possibility of cardiovascular disease, coronary disease, heart attacks, and strokes.

According to a medical study done by Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), high cholesterol levels are not only bad for the heart and blood vessels, but they may also

increase the risk of cognitive impairment, which may lead to Alzheimer's disease.

During September, National Cholesterol Education Month, VA highlights screening and prevention as two smart ways to combat high cholesterol and subsequent health problems. A simple blood test lets you and your doctor know your total blood cholesterol level and allows your doctor to recommend treatment. Keep these tips in mind when considering cholesterol screening:

Your total blood cholesterol level should

be 200 mg/dl or less, but it can differ from person to person based on weight, lifestyle, and family history.

Request a blood test that provides separate levels of "bad" (LDL) cholesterol and "good" (HDL) cholesterol. High levels of HDL cholesterol help to prevent heart disease. Your HDL level should at least be over 40. Levels above 60 are considered even more protective against coronary disease. Your LDL level should be under 100.

Everyone 20 or older should have his or her

a day reduced by half the rate of death and nonfatal heart attacks in patients with unstable angina.

1995 - Conducted the National Surgical Quality Improvement Program, which is instrumental in identifying ways to improve surgical care.

1996 - Identified the gene that causes Werner's syndrome, a disease marked by premature aging.

Developed clinical practice guidelines on cholesterol screening for the American College of Physicians.

Found that an implantable insulin pump offers better blood sugar control, weight control, and quality of life for adult-onset diabetes than multiple daily injections.

1997 - Identified a gene associated with a major risk for schizophrenia.

1998 - Identified a gene that causes a rare form of dementia, providing a potential target for treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

Found that less expensive, conservative

treatment of a common type of heart attack is superior to the standard heart catheterization and balloon angioplasty.

Demonstrated that administering erythropoietin under the skin is as effective and less expensive than intravenous administration for treatment of severe anemia in hemodialysis patients.

Started the Quality Enhancement Research Initiative that is rapidly translating research results into clinical practice for conditions prevalent among veterans.

Ferid Murad, MD, PhD, shared the Nobel Prize in Medicine. His studies have been integral in discovering the role of nitric oxide in body functions.

1999 - Found that a chemical messenger and a neurotoxin can shut down neurons associated with chronic pain while leaving intact those needed for a normal pain response.

Conducted the first treatment trials for Gulf War veterans' illnesses. One study is testing an antibiotic, and another is testing exercise and behavioral therapy for

effectiveness in treating unexplained symptoms reported by veterans.

2000 - Showed that colonoscopy is superior to the more widely used sigmoidoscopy as a primary screening mechanism for colon cancer.

Conducted the first large clinical trial of hearing aids, showing that the devices can help the hearing-impaired in both quiet and noisy environments.

2001 - Began the first clinical trial under the new Tri-National Research Initiative. Researchers from the VA collaborated with colleagues from Canada and the United Kingdom to determine the optimal antiretroviral therapy for AIDS and HIV infection.

Initiated a landmark clinical trial that assesses the effectiveness of implanting deep brain stimulators as a treatment for Parkinson's disease.

Note: Next edition of VA Puget Sound News will contain Research Milestones from 2002-2005.

Source: www.va.gov

cholesterol checked at least every five years.

Be aware of your family's medical history. Your total blood cholesterol level may be increased if you are a male over 45 or a female over 55; if you are a smoker; if you have a family history of high blood pressure or heart attacks before 55 for males or 65 for females.

While these cholesterol levels are considered average, ask your health care provider about an acceptable cholesterol level for you and how often you need to check it.

Although cholesterol-lowering drugs do exist, VA emphasizes prevention as the best approach for controlling cholesterol levels. A healthy diet and exercise are key in preventing LDL cholesterol build-up. Follow these guidelines for preventing high-risk cholesterol levels:

Limit your intake of saturated fat, which stimulates the production of cholesterol in the liver. Saturated fat is generally found in beef, pork and fattening dairy items. High cholesterol foods also include egg yolks, organ meats and shellfish.

As an alternative, eat more broiled or grilled fish and skinless chicken breasts. Choose lean cuts of beef, pork and lamb. Choose low-fat or non-fat dairy products.

Eat smaller portions and a variety of foods. Include fiber-rich dark grains, oats, and all fruits and vegetables in your diet.

Exercise at least three to five times a week for 20-30 minutes. Being physically active will help lower LDL cholesterol and raise HDL cholesterol.

IN THE NEWS

VISN 20 NEWS Cathy Dickson, Appointed QMO

"It gives me great pleasure to announce that Ms. Catherine (Cathy) Dickson, Acting VISN 20 Quality Management Officer (QMO) has been permanently selected for the position of VISN 20 Quality Management Office, 2005," states Dennis M. Lewis, FACHE Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management.

Dickson has served as VISN 20's Acting Quality Management Officer since October 1, 2004. Prior to that, she served as the Director of Quality Improvement for VA Puget Sound. She was one of the primary architects of VISN 20's Continuous Organizational Readiness Evaluation (CORE) approach, a nationally recognized program that she currently leads. She has been VISN 20's Accreditation Coordinator since 1999.

Electronic Informed Consent Comes to VA Puget Sound

VA is launching a program called iMedConsent to improve tracking and patient consent. Prior to iMedConsent, lost consent forms caused delays or cancellations of scheduled procedures. iMedConsent keeps signed consent forms in the patient's electronic medical record, making it easier to find these forms.

Prior to any medical treatment or procedure, your VA provider will:

- Describe your condition, diagnosis and prognosis
- Describe the proposed treatment
- Tell you what benefits you should get from the treatment
- Tell you what risks there are with the treatment
- Tell you the name of the staff person who will be providing the treatment or procedures.

For many common treatments, the provider asks for the patient's verbal consent. However, for other treatments and procedures, the patient must sign a consent form to indicate his/her agreement to proceed. At VA Puget Sound you may soon be signing on an electronic signature pad.

VA is putting iMedConsent software in all facilities. With this program, computers help clinicians improve their informed consent process. In May 2005 VA Puget Sound began using iMedConsent in Vascular Surgery and Cardiology clinics.

- iMedConsent includes:
- Patient education materials
- Drug information
- Anatomical pictures and diagrams

For treatments and procedures requiring signed consent, the program:

- Guides the practitioner through the steps of informed consent;
- Generates a patient-friendly consent form; Creates consent forms with patient-specific information and information pertaining to the selected treatment or procedure;
- Embeds signatures from an electronic signature pad;
- Stores the consent form in the patient record; and
- Generates an accompanying progress

iMedConsent

Behavioral Neuroscience Award Goes to Dianne Lattemann, PhD

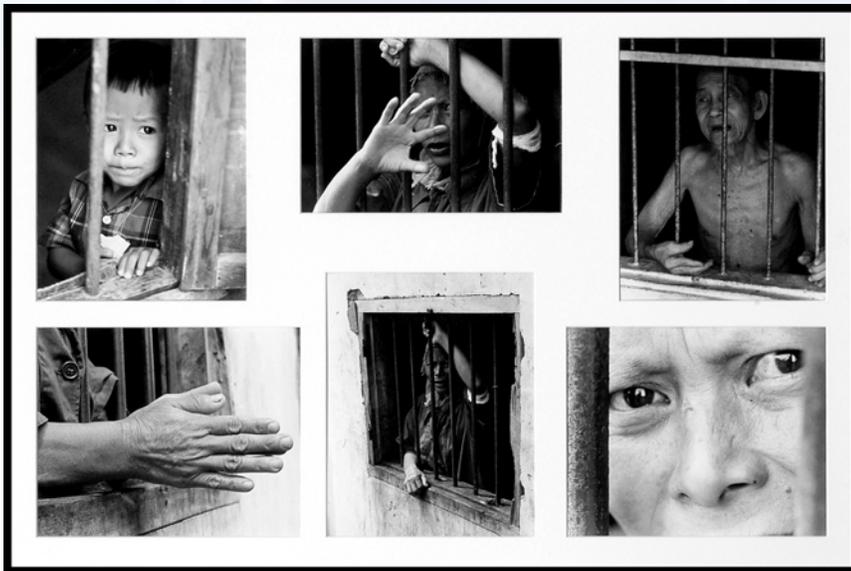
Dianne Lattemann, PhD, a Research Career Scientist, was recently awarded the Donald G. Marquis Behavioral Neuroscience Award for the best paper published in Behavioral Neuroscience in 2004

for her publication entitled "Intraventricular insulin and leptin reverse place preference conditioned with high-fat diet in rats."

Local Veterans Receive Special Commemorative Awards from National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

Ed Orr, a 61-year-old U.S. Navy veteran from Lynden, Wash., has been chosen for the "Military Combat Experience" award by the 2005 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival selection committee. This honor is awarded to veterans who have experienced combat duty during World War II, Vietnam, the Korean War, the Gulf War or current combat operations. The artwork must relate to the veteran's personal experience in that war or conflict.

Orr received recognition for his photo collection entitled "Flashbacks." It is displayed with a poem that describes his personal struggle with the aftereffects of the Vietnam War. Between 1966 and 1968, Orr was assigned as a combat photographer and artist. In 1968, during the height of the Tet Offensive in Da Nang, he walked past a building and began to photograph the images he saw. "The building was a repository for orphans, lepers, the mentally ill, criminals and enemy suspects," Orr said. "An image of me can be seen in the close-up of a woman's eyes [pictured in one of the photographs]."



"Flashbacks" by Ed Orr

Receiving the special commemorative award is a distinctive honor, recognizing how the arts have helped veterans express feelings about their service in the military.

Orr, along with two other area veterans representing the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Puget Sound Health Care System in Seattle are headed to Denver, Colorado to participate in the 2005 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. These local veterans competed against 3000 nationwide, and will join more than 110 other participants from across the United States. "The Department of Veterans Affairs is committed to healing beyond just physical rehabilitation," said R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival provides an artistic channel for our nation's heroes to recover physically, mentally and emotionally."

The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival is sponsored by VA, the American Legion Auxiliary and Help Hospitalized Veterans. It is hosted this year by the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System in Denver.

The local veterans attending the 2005 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival are:

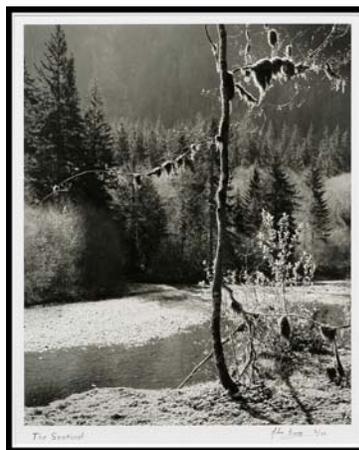
- Ed Orr is 61, from Lynden, WA and a Navy Vietnam, combat veteran. Orr won gold medals in two different categories- color photography ("Curves") and The Military Combat Experience ("Flashbacks")
- Johnny Berry is 56, an Army veteran from Renton, who won a gold medal in B&W Photography ("The Sentinel").
- Jim Utz is also 56, another combat veteran of Vietnam, who served in the Air Force, from Pacific and won a gold medal in the Fiber Arts category ("Blue Moods").

For further information about the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival log on to the Festival's website:

<http://www.creativeartsfestival.org>



"Blue Moods" by James Utz



"The Sentinel" by John Berry

- After World War I, veterans' benefits were increased to include vocational rehabilitation and insurance. In 1931, pensioners included eight from the war of 1812; 550 from the Mexican War; 10,000 from the Indian Wars and almost 200,000 from the Civil War. The new VA organization treated 294 women veterans. In 1936, Tuberculosis was the single greatest cause of death in VA Hospitals.
- World War II gave birth to the G.I. Bill in 1944. This bill had more impact on the American way of life than any law in the previous century.
- In 1952, VA had almost one thousand television sets in 90 facilities. By 1953, VA advanced into the electronic age, with the purchase of three electronic data processing systems.
- In 1964, the distribution of free cigarettes and other tobacco products was banned as a result of the Surgeon General's report.
- During the Vietnam War, advances in medical treatment reduced the number of deaths and increased the number of survivable injuries compared to previous conflicts. Years later, VA would identify diabetes as service connected for those exposed to agent orange.
- In 1986 a means test was developed to determine health care eligibility based on veterans' incomes. And for the first time, VA was legally required to charge private insurance companies for VA medical care given to veterans for non-service connected conditions. By 1989, the Veterans Administration reached cabinet level status and assumed a new name: Department of Veterans Affairs, or simply VA.
- The Women Veterans Health Programs Act of 1992 authorized new services for female veterans. In 1999, VA launched an aggressive campaign against hepatitis C.
- During the last decade the United States has been involved in two major conflicts in the Gulf region. Additionally troops have been involved in peace keeping missions around world.
- The threat of terrorism has redefined the VA's role nationally. The agency now has an additional mission of supporting Homeland Security and is an active partner in federal government's response to natural disasters.



As we move into the next 75 years, VA continues to adapt itself to meet the future needs of veterans. In doing so, we continue to challenge our employees to look at care in new ways and to apply what we have learned from previous generations, conflicts and accomplishments. We are better prepared to meet the needs of our newest population of veterans. We know that many are young, many are female and many are employed full time; requiring a shift in how we deliver care, how we provide access to information and resources. VA's commitment to excellence in research and teaching will continue to play a major role in shaping the outcomes of healthcare.

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Comments or future story ideas may be submitted to the VA Puget Sound News Editorial Board via Outlook to Jeri Rowe. All photos for newsletter inclusion must be taken or approved by the Editorial Board.

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