



July 2016

Monthly Report from the Director



Scott R. Isaacks, FACHE
Medical Center Director



11th Annual Christmas in July

July 10

Charleston VAMC

Local Veterans Movie Event

July 29

VAMC Main Auditorium

Throughout the national conversation on VA, I think we all agree on one thing ... the brave men and women who have worn our nation's uniform deserve nothing less than the very best health care and services. That is exactly what we are determined to provide them here at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center, and that is what we are delivering. I am very pleased to announce that we have once again been ranked as a 5 Star medical center, the highest possible rating according to VA's Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning Value (SAIL) model. Notably, our VA is 3rd in the U.S. for Continuity of Care in Mental Health; we are ranked again in the top 10 percent for quality and efficiency in the U.S. and continued our 3rd place efficiency ranking; and we improved our Call Center responsiveness ranking from 19th to 8th. SAIL is a comprehensive tool that assesses 25 quality measures in such areas as complications, patient safety, access to care, and customer satisfaction. SAIL also includes efficiency measures such as telephone abandonment rate and benchmarking employee satisfaction scores.

While our 5 Star ranking is an achievement we are all proud of, its real importance is that it assures Veterans they will receive the very best care and the best patient experience here at their VA. Frankly, they deserve nothing less.

Our ranking speaks volumes about the quality of our staff - a number of whom also practice and teach at MUSC - who are resolute in their determination to be a world-class medical center dedicated to healing our nation's heroes. As we continue our track record, we are also finding new employees who have chosen to be part of our team because they know they are coming to a quality medical center. That's a win for our team and a win for our Veterans!

Commission on Care

Earlier this month, the President and Secretary McDonald received the Commission on Care report, which includes recommendations on health care delivery for Veterans over the next 20 years. While this critical aspect of the report has not been widely publicized in the media, the Commission's report clearly recognizes that VA provides care that is comparable to or, in many cases, better in clinical quality than care generally available in the private sector. While there is variability amongst VA medical centers, our VA is helping set the standard of excellence for the Veterans Health Administration.

The report recognizes issues with the Choice Program and recommends the establishment of the VHA Care System - a system that would include VHA providers, Department of Defense and other federally-funded providers, and





Our most recent Department of Defense partnership is celebrated above at the grand opening of the new physical therapy clinic at a community based outpatient clinic at Naval Hospital Beaufort in Beaufort, SC.

VHA-credentialed community providers – with VA coordinating care for Veterans across the continuum. The Commission also recognized that the areas where VA has challenges with access to care are the same areas where community health care struggles to provide care.

Secretary McDonald, Deputy Secretary Gibson, and all of VA leadership strongly believe that the best place for Veterans to receive health care is at VHA facilities, in partnership with care in the community. Deputy Secretary Gibson has visited Charleston VAMC numerous times over the past two years and has clearly stated he considers our VA to be one of the best in the Department for quality of care and access. In May, we presented our strategic planning model for maintaining access to care for Veterans while managing a record growth rate of 6.1 percent in FY2015, which ranks us as the 5th fastest growing VAMC for percent increase of unique patients. Deputy Secretary Gibson recognized our analysis for determining when new provider teams will be needed, and our recruitment in advance of that need as a best practice to export across VA. Our VA has also been named VA's first national Tele-Mental Health Hub designated to provide care via TMH to Veterans from Maine to West Virginia to Texas. This hub will significantly expand access to Mental Health care for Veterans in rural areas.

We also continue to work with our community and DoD partners to expand access to services such as oncology, physical therapy, dermatology and more, purchasing care when appropriate to ensure Veterans are seen in a timely fashion, and sharing clinics to care for Veterans and active duty alike. Additionally, we're expanding several specialty services to community outpatient clinics so that Veterans can access those services in a more convenient location.

Our work to serve Veterans continues, and we are determined to continue to provide the best health care anywhere for them. We know that our Veterans count on us and we will continue to prove the value of comprehensive care found only in VA to address our heroes' unique needs.

Parking

We understand that parking has long been a source of frustration at Charleston VAMC, and we're working hard every day to improve the parking situation. The parking deck is in its final stages and projected to open late this summer. When it opens, we will gain approximately 300 additional parking spaces on our campus. Parking for Veterans is also available in an offsite leased parking lot located at 41 Folly Rd. We are currently in talks to attain 175 additional parking spaces offsite.

We also encourage Veterans to use the valet services at the front of the facility. (Note: Due to ongoing construction improvements, the valet service has recently moved to the front parking area to the left after entering the hospital.) We've recently amended the valet contract to increase the number of vehicles that can be accommodated in a timely

manner. The amended contract went into effect a few weeks ago and we're already seeing improvements. Last week, the valet service parked more cars than have ever been parked in a single day at the VAMC, and wait times have decreased significantly.

Online Health Care Application

Enrollment is getting easier for Veterans thanks to the new Online Health Care Application! The application was rolled out on June 30 and is used by Veterans to apply for health care eligibility—it's the first step to being seen at a VA medical facility for Veterans who are not yet enrolled. Veterans already receiving health care do not have to fill out this application.

The application is web-based, mobile compatible and does not require a login. It's easily accessible at www.vets.gov. This new user-friendly application makes the process easier for our Veterans to get started with VA health care and reduces frustration and delays during enrollment. We are excited to be able to direct our future patients to this new application that only requires an internet connection and about 15 -45 minutes of their time.

Upon completion of the online form, the applicant will receive a confirmation number and a phone number to call to follow up on the status of their application if they do not hear from the VA within one week.

As we continue to grow and implement improvements to better serve you, it is good to remember that our mission remains the same ... to care for those who have borne the battle ... and our resolve to do so with the highest standards of quality, access, integrity and honor will not fail. We are privileged to serve our heroes and we look forward to doing so for many, many years to come.

With respect and gratitude,

Scott R. Isaacks