



a message from the

*Program
Manager*

Dear Friends,

I confess one of the reasons I moved to the Lowcountry is the warm weather and proximity to the beautiful beaches. Throughout my life I spent more time than I care to admit seeking the perfect tan. All my vacations were spent at a beach and using little to no sun screen. Sun lamps, newly invented tanning beds and baby oil with iodine were tools of my trade.

Then Melanoma entered my life. A small dark freckle that was almost undetectable was giving me a wake-up call that no tan is healthy. Finding possible skin cancers doesn't require any x-rays or blood tests – just your eyes and a mirror. If skin cancer does develop, finding it early is the best way to ensure it can be treated effectively. And while the approach of beach season makes this a hot topic, in this area we really need to wear sunscreen year-round.

There are many things you can do to improve your health. Remember to have your yearly Comprehensive Women's exam including cervical and breast cancer screenings. Know your cholesterol and blood pressure numbers. If you haven't started, try a walking or exercise program to improve your health and well-being. And get a flu shot ... it's not too late to get or prevent the flu this season.

We want to be your health care provider and partner in prevention. If you have questions or just want to drop by to chat please contact me. I look forward to seeing you.

Patricia Hancox LISW-CP

Patricia Hancox, LISW-CP
Women Veterans Program Manager
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From the Front Lines . . .

VA Social Worker helps troops fight stress in Afghanistan

Like many VA employees, Social Worker Renee Reagan is a Veteran. After 9/11 the then 36-year-old joined the Army Reserve, serving three stints on active duty including a deployment to Kuwait.

Today, Maj. Reagan is mobilized for the fourth time. She deployed last August to Afghanistan where she helps Soldiers deal with the stresses of war. As the Officer in Charge for the 113th Medical Detachment Combat Stress Control team at a forward base supporting the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division - a unit that has suffered numerous casualties - Reagan is working to heal the wounds that others may not see.



Maj. Renee Reagan (3rd from left) with Soldiers in Afghanistan.

Journalist Cheryl Hatch. "We meet the Soldiers typically by squad. We get them to talk about it, the event and their feelings. We try to identify any at-risk Soldiers and can meet with them individually. Our role is basically to help the Soldiers where they're at."

Designed as a proactive and reactive team, the Combat

Reagan often gets to work with a very special military member when she goes into combat zones. Sgt. 1st Class Zeke, a black Labrador therapy dog who is part of the 113th, goes out with Reagan and her team to help break the ice with Soldiers who might not want to talk with social workers or therapists.

As Reagan knows Soldiers have no problem seeing a dog. So she counts on Zeke to open the door for Soldiers to deal with what they have seen on the battlefield.

While she misses the comforts of home, she is grateful for the experience of serving in Afghanistan and of the camaraderie she has found there. Reagan says women are playing a vital role in combat zones, and reports their work ethic and heroic actions are leading to greater acceptance by their male counterparts.

And while Zeke may be a guy, Reagan appreciates the nurturing care he brings to the troops in the combat zone and his assistance as she serves her fellow Soldiers.



Sgt. 1st Class Zeke, a therapy dog, works with Maj. Reagan.

"When there is a traumatic event, we're out there for one to three days," Reagan said in a recent news report by

Stress Control team meets with Soldiers in combat outposts to discuss everything from relationship issues to operation and combat stress.

SUNNY DAYS

To learn more about skin cancer prevention go to www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/.

SAFER IN THE SHADE

Skin cancer is the most common of all cancer types, but it can be easily prevented by learning to play it safe in the sun.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says skin cancer is the leading form of cancer in the U.S. Nearly 24,000 of the more than 2 million skin cancers diagnosed each year in this country are in women, and the rate of young women developing melanoma has more than doubled in the past 30 years. Of that 24,000 about 3,000 of those women will lose their lives to skin cancer.

While skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the U.S., the good news is the two most common types – basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas – are highly curable. But melanoma is more dangerous and all forms of skin cancer should be taken seriously.

Approximately 65 – 90 percent of melanomas are caused by exposure to ultra-



violet (UV) light. These rays are invisible radiation from the sun, tanning beds and sunlamps that can penetrate and damage skin cells in just 15 minutes if the skin is unprotected. Since UV rays can cause damage even on cloudy and hazy days and sun damage is cumulative over your lifespan, year-round sun protection is especially important.

The good news is that you can do a lot to protect yourself and your family from skin cancer, or to catch it early enough so that it can be treated effectively. Be sure to educate your children and grandchildren about the need to protect themselves

from sun exposure since just a few sunburns early in life can significantly increase their risk of skin cancer later in life. Some helpful tips include:

- Wear SPF15 or higher whenever you spend time outdoors.
- Seek the shade, especially during midday hours, and cover up with clothing and wide brimmed hats.
- Wear sunglasses.
- Avoid indoor tanning! Try tanning creams instead.
- Ask your provider to do an annual skin exam.



Concerning Women is offered to provide health information. Medical advice should be obtained from your health care provider. If you would like to provide any suggestions or story ideas email us at vhachaconcerningwomen@va.gov. or check out the latest news on our website www.charleston.va.gov. Questions or comments, please call (843) 789-7260. Editor: Tonya Lobbestael

Blue Button New Online Tools for Veteran Job-Seekers

Veterans now have on-demand access and can download official data about their military training and experience, which can be used to help them find jobs and continue their careers. Their service data can be uploaded to job search and networking sites to help identify employment opportunities.

Veterans can use VA's online My HealtheVet portal (www.myhealth.va.gov) to see official information about their military service, including deployment data, in-uniform experience, and Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) codes which define the type of work performed and



Blue Button Download My Data

skills learned during their tour of duty. Veterans can electronically download that information to their personal computers by using an enhanced version of the Blue Button. This new capability is the latest addition to a growing suite of job-hunting tools available to Veterans.

Several industry partners have signed up to create -- or have even already implemented -- third-party applications that can

read military specialties or classification codes in Blue Button format, automatically translate those codes into civilian descriptions, and identify openings and other resources for Veterans.

Military job information available to Veterans under this program will depend on discharge or retirement date.

- All Veterans discharged after 1980 will see military specialty or classification codes;

- Some Veterans discharged between 1975-1980 will see military specialty or classification codes;
- Some Gulf War Veterans may see combat pay and deployment periods;
- All Post-9/11 Veterans will see combat pay and deployment periods

Veterans enrolled in VA health care can access their military service information through My HealtheVet. Veterans who have not yet signed up for My HealtheVet access can register for a My HealtheVet account at any VA medical center by completing a one-time identity-verification process to help assure their data privacy.

Five awkward minutes can save your life

Truth is no woman likes having a Pap test. But since it's one of the easiest and fastest ways to detect cervical cancer those five awkward minutes are more than worth it.

Cervical cancer is highly preventable, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, because screening tests like the Pap and vaccine to prevent human papillomavirus (HPV) are readily available. And if cervical cancer is found early it is very treatable with long survival rates.

The Pap test detects pre-cancers or cell changes on the cervix that could become cervical cancer. It is recommended for all women, and is one of the most reliable and effective cancer screening tests available. Women should begin getting regular Pap test at 21 years of age or within three years of the first time they have sex if that comes first. Even if you think you are too old to have or child, or are not having sex anymore it is still important to have regular Pap tests.

The VA provides comprehensive Women's care including gynecological services. All you have to do is call your Primary Care clinic and schedule your Pap test. Remember, those five minutes really could save your life.

WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

Five awkward minutes can save your life.

Schedule a Pap test.
Let VA help.

★ You served, you deserve the best care anywhere. ★

Department of Veterans Affairs | www.vahealth.va.gov/womenhealth
Women Veterans Health Strategy Health Care Group, WDC | 8 10-222 012019

The advertisement features a woman in a white lab coat sitting on a medical examination table in a clinical setting. The text is overlaid on the image.

MENOPAUSE MOMENT

Herbals are popular for trying to lessen the symptoms of menopause such as hot flashes and night sweats. Black Cohosh, evening primrose oil, and isoflavones which can be found in foods such as soy products may help relieve menopause symptoms but research results on their effectiveness are contradictory. Supplements are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, which means different manufacturers can have different ingredients which can lead to taking too much or too little of the product. The best advice is to check with your provider BEFORE adding an herbal or supplement to ensure there is no conflict with other medications you may be taking, and no contraindication for your overall health.

Important VA Phone Numbers

Charleston VA Medical Center: 843-577-5011 or toll free 1-888-878-6884

Telephone Advice Line: 843-789-6400 or toll free at 1-888-878-6884

Veterans who need medical advice from their Primary Care provider or have questions about their medications can call the TAP line Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Scheduling an Appointment: 843-789-6500 or toll free at 1-888-878-6884

Veterans who need to schedule, cancel or reschedule an appointment for all Primary Care Clinics including Myrtle Beach, Savannah, Beaufort, Trident and Goose Creek can call Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Automated Prescription Refill Line: 843-577-5011 extension 5220 or toll free at 1-888-878-6884 extension 5220

Veterans who need to request a refill of a prescription or check the status of refills can call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Have your social security number and prescription numbers ready when calling.

VA Benefits (other than health care): 1-800-827-1000

Veterans who need information on VA benefits including VA pension and compensation, home loans and education can call the VA Regional Office.

Billing Questions: 1-866-258-2772

Veterans who have questions about a bill received from the Charleston VA Medical Center can call the VA Revenue Center.

Suicide Prevention: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) Press 1 for Veterans

Veterans can call the VA Suicide Prevention Lifeline to talk to trained professionals 24 hours a day, seven days a week or visit our website www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

My HealthVet: www.myhealth.va.gov

My HealthVet empowers you to manage your health. It offers anywhere, anytime Internet access to Veteran health care information and services. Log on and sign up today!

For more information on VA related topics visit www.charleston.va.gov.



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Concerning
Women