



Scott R. Isaacks, FACHE
Medical Center Director

Our goal every day at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center is to provide the highest quality medical care for every Veteran – a goal we are achieving as proven by our continued 5 Star rating. But quality care goes far beyond an appointment or inpatient stay at the hospital. That is why our VA embraces the practice of Patient Family Centered Care (PFCC). The patient and their family members are instrumental in the integrated health care team, setting goals and making treatment and care decisions. PFCC focuses on multiple aspects of the patient experience from communication to environment to treatment options.

At the Ralph H. Johnson VA we have implemented a number of PFCC initiatives over the past several years. In every inpatient room there is a white board where the patient's nurse updates information on each shift. We encourage all of our Veterans to complete a Personalized Health Plan with their Primary Care team to set goals for improving their health based on their wishes that in turn helps guide treatment decisions. We also now offer a number of alternative therapy options ranging from Tai Chi and Yoga classes to acupuncture to mindfulness to ease chronic pain. The point is to fully involve the Veteran and the family in care decisions so they can live the life they want with optimum health.

Most recently, we have implemented an initiative known as Project RED, a patient family centered re-engineered discharge process to fully prepare them as the patient continues to heal. Project RED is a patient safety initiative designed in partnership with the Veteran and family to educate them on the diagnosis, care plan, medications, post-discharge services and resources. Project RED involves the entire clinical team from doctors to nurses to pharmacists to dietitians, social workers and therapists who work with the Veteran and their family. Patients go home with a list of phone numbers and resources to contact if they have questions, a calendar listing upcoming appointments, and a follow-up phone call by their Primary Care team within 48 hours. The outcome of this best practice is fewer readmissions, better overall health for the Veteran, and a patient experience that has gone beyond a quality clinical encounter.

While we receive many compliments each week regarding the care and services provided here, patient family centered care and improved customer service continue to be focuses for improvement at your VA. Over the past month many of our employees have participated in My VA 101 training and First Impressions Customer Service training. Our expectation is that every Veteran has a positive, professional experience every time they visit or contact our VA and our continued training efforts serve to better ensure we reach this goal.



VA | Ralph H. Johnson
VA Medical Center

109 Bee Street | Charleston, SC 29401
1 (888) 878-6884
www.charleston.va.gov

Veterans Choice Update

The Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act, which was implemented a year ago, is fully supported by our VA. We understand with new programs like Choice, there are often questions, which is why one of our first actions was hiring Choice Navigators to assist Veterans who choose to receive care in the community. As the Choice Program expands more Veterans may be eligible for community care. Based upon comments from our patients, though, I believe our Veterans have clearly stated their desire to receive their care at our VA. Currently, less than 550 of the 7,100 Veterans on the Veterans Choice List have chosen to receive care in the community. That is less than 8% of eligible Veterans that live more than 40 miles from a VA facility or cannot be seen at the VA within 30 days. We appreciate the confidence our Veterans have placed in us to continue to deliver timely, quality care for their medical needs. If you or a Veteran you know has questions regarding the Choice Program, please visit www.va.gov/opa/choiceact.

New Appointment Reminder Postcards

Last month, I introduced the new appointment reminder postcards that will soon be sent to Veterans in place of appointment letters. These cards will be mailed directly to you and will include pertinent appointment information, maps to the facility, and specialized instructions for your visit. As we transition to this new system, please ensure that you do not accidentally throw away your appointment reminder card. These cards are the size of typical travel postcard and have tear tabs on the sides to ensure that your medical information remains secure and private. This initiative is just one of the many ways that we seek to improve and serve you better at your Charleston VA.

Stand Down Against Homelessness

Every Veteran should have a home and be able to live the life he or she desires. At our VA, our Homeless Team works tirelessly in Charleston, Savannah, Myrtle Beach, and all the communities we serve to make that dream a reality for Veterans experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. Our housing first initiative provides a safe place to stay while working through recovery, job retraining, and the myriad of issues that need to be addressed. Our Homeless Patient Aligned Care Team provides primary and mental health care, and our new Community Resource and Referral Center located in North Charleston includes a wealth of resources and community partners to help Veterans get back on their feet. This month we have held Stand Down events in Myrtle Beach and Savannah to assist Veterans in need. These events offered food, clothing, VA health care, housing assistance, employment training and opportunities and more to hundreds at each of these events. Next month we will hold our Charleston Stand Down at the Community Resource and Referral Center on October 30. If you or your organization is interested in volunteering or supporting Stand Down, please contact Voluntary Service at vhachavavs@va.gov.

Finally, I encourage us all to honor and remember our Prisoners of War and Missing in Action on National POW/MIA Day, observed each year in September, and every day. We are privileged to have a number of former POW's that we care for at our VA. Their sacrifices and stories are quite simply remarkable. I invite you to learn more about them by visiting our Hall of Heroes on the first floor the next time you come to your VA medical center. I know you will be inspired by their enduring commitment to fight for our freedom, and that you will join me in remembering them and all of our heroes each and every day. Thank you for the privilege of serving those who served.

