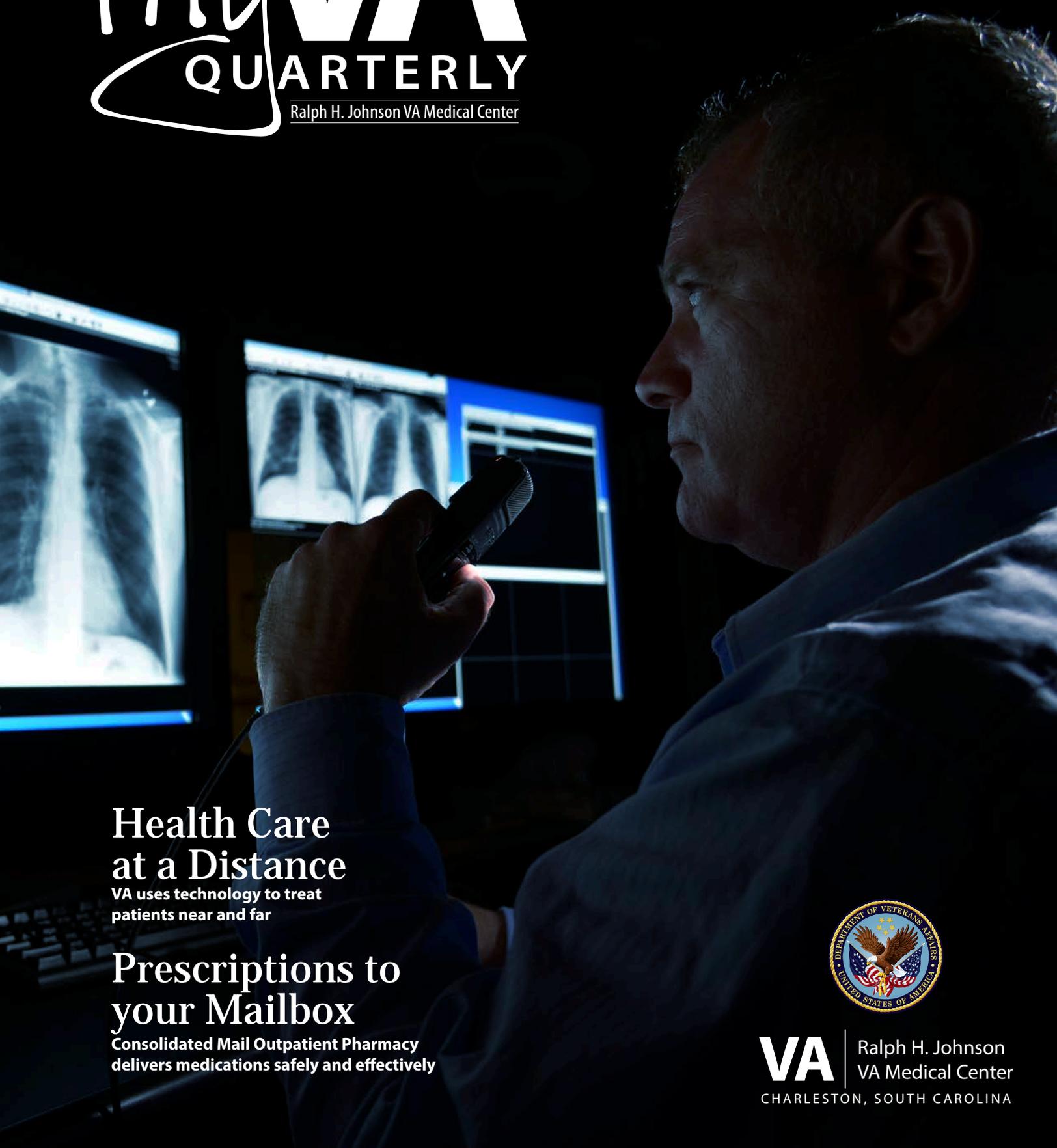


Fall 2015

mi VA QUARTERLY

Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center



Health Care at a Distance

VA uses technology to treat
patients near and far

Prescriptions to your Mailbox

Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy
delivers medications safely and effectively



VA | Ralph H. Johnson
VA Medical Center
CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA



From the Director

In the ever-changing environment of the medical field, it is important that we work to continually improve not only the treatment options and therapies available to our Veterans, but also the ways in which we deliver this care. Here at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center, we are using state-of-art-technologies to propel our patient care into the digital age – offering improved and expanded services online through secure channels and delivering world-class health care directly to our Veteran patients often in the comfort of their own homes.

In this issue of myVA Quarterly, you will learn about the ways that the medical center marries quality care with technology in an effort to provide an outstanding customer experience. In this issue, you'll visit Charleston's Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy, one of just seven in the nation, which fills nearly all of the prescriptions needed by our Veterans – shipping them with minimal delay straight to the patient's mailbox. You'll also hear about our nationally recognized telemental health program, which

seeks to reduce the stigma that often surrounds coming to a hospital to receive mental health treatment by bringing the doctor to the patient via a highly-effective and private teleconferencing platform. Additionally, you'll find out about exclusive services available to you through My HealthVet, VA's online personal health record, and how to enroll. The system allows Veterans to communicate with their doctors through secure messaging, manage prescription refills and view upcoming VA appointments – all with the click of a mouse. Innovations like these make your VA more accessible and adaptable in our fast-paced world and they allow us to care for you no matter where you may be around the country.

Digital solutions are just one of the many ways that we are continuing to provide quality care in the midst of rapid patient growth. Another way we are managing our population increase is through the expansion of our current outpatient clinics. In the pages of this quarter's issue, we will share with you the newly renovated clinic space at the Beaufort Community Based

Outpatient Clinic, jointly located with the Naval Hospital Beaufort in Beaufort, South Carolina. The new area, on the fourth floor of the clinic, has allowed us to consolidate staff and has given us room to offer more services in the future with the hiring of additional clinicians to include a dietician and more primary care physicians. The Beaufort CBOC will also be home to a VA and DOD staffed and utilized physical therapy clinic in the coming year.

It is my sincere hope that this issue serves as a source of valuable information to you and offers some insight into the new and exciting features we have implemented to serve you better. Here at the Charleston VA, we understand that health care is much more than just treating a disease ... it's about caring for the whole person. It is in that spirit that we strive to be better every day. Thank you, as always, for trusting us with this mission.

Scott R. Spacks

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Ambulatory Care Center Expands

By Erin Curran, Public Affairs Specialist

The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center leadership recognized several years ago that the growing population of Veterans would benefit from additional access for surgery and gastrointestinal procedures. More Veterans having procedures called for an expansion of the Ambulatory Care Center. The new ACC expansion, located on the 3rd floor of the medical center, opened on May 11 and has increased the unit from 13 to 21 beds with an additional 5 bed observation unit.

“The unit provides immediate pre procedure and post procedure access for the growing Veteran population having procedures or surgery,” said ACC Nurse Manager Allen Boyd. “The new ACC will also meet our future access demands. We are especially proud that we can provide our female Veterans with private rooms in the new ACC or Observation Unit.”

In following the principles of patient and family centered care, the new unit has improved the care of the growing number of female Veterans. The ACC has the ability to provide a private room with a bathroom or on days with multiple females, staff can designate an entire room for females only. This flexibility on

the unit provides increased comfort for women receiving care at the Charleston VAMC.

The ACC may see 50-60 Veterans in a single day. To successfully meet this high demand and turbulence with patient turnover, the unit patient flow was developed by the direct care staff. Prior to the unit opening, all staff was invited to walk the new area and provide input into the patient flow. They then selected the rooms to be designated for pre or post care. The decisions for room assignments were made by those with direct care involvement and the end result was patient movement that allows immediate access to a bed without any delays in direct care.

“The nursing care is provided by an incredible group of staff, many who are Veterans, and supported strongly by our hospital leadership group,” said Boyd.

In 2016, the Charleston VAMC will be opening a sixth operating room and four new GI procedure rooms. The expansion of the ACC will help meet the increased pre and post procedure demands that will come with the completion of these two projects.





Beaufort outpatient clinic consolidates, expands services

By Meredith Hagen, Lead Public Affairs Specialist

The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center’s outpatient clinic in Beaufort moved into a freshly renovated 8,450 square foot space in August. The new area, located on the fourth floor of Naval Hospital Beaufort in Beaufort, South Carolina, provides nearly 6,000 square feet of additional space and will allow the clinic to keep up with growing patient demand and add expanded services.

“Our staff members have been provided with additional work space to further serve our patients,” said Beaufort CBOC Administrative Officer Michael Haje. “This additional space will also provide us with the ability to increase the number of services offered to our Veterans.”

The Beaufort clinic, opened in 2001, was originally located on the first floor of the naval hospital and was staffed with one doctor, one nurse and one medical support assistant. Now the team has expanded to nearly 40 staff members and more are anticipated to come on board soon.

The fourth floor space will house four Primary Care doctors, four Mental Health providers, including one provider dedicated to completing compensation and pension exams, as well as administrative support staff, a pharmacist, a primary care social worker, and eventually a dietitian.

The facility also houses multiple shared services through an approved joint venture with the Navy. These include shared radiology services, a mobile MRI, a shared dermatology clinic staffed by VA employees, shared podiatry services delivered by DOD providers and a laboratory which is staffed by both VA and DOD workers and provides significant support to Veteran patients.

In the near future, Beaufort will add a Joint Physical Therapy Clinic that will be located on the first floor and will consist of a little more than 4,700



New expanded patient waiting room.

square feet. This initiative will add two VA physical therapists, two VA physical therapy assistants, one VA medical services assistant and two VA prosthetics purchasing agents to the current Naval Hospital Beaufort physical therapy staff. Together they will serve both Veterans and DOD beneficiaries. The clinic is expected to be open in mid-2016.

“The Joint Physical Therapy Clinic is another step toward us expanding services to the Veterans and strengthening the VA/DOD collaboration,” said Haje. “We are a unique VA facility; a prime example of how the VA and DOD can partner. We’ve never been able to provide PT here but with the new JIF, we will be able to do that and offer excellent care to both Veterans and active service members.”



Beaufort clinic expansion includes automated check-in kiosks.



Charleston VAMC leader in

By Erin Curran, Public Affairs Specialist

Access to telemental health (TMH) services provided for Veterans has experienced tremendous growth within the last decade. About eight years ago, the TMH program at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center had one set of equipment, including just one monitor and was providing limited services to only the Beaufort and Myrtle Beach VA Outpatient Clinics. Today, the program provides services to Veterans in five states across the Southeast. These services include psychiatric medication management, psychotherapy and services through the homeless program.

“Last year, the TMH program at the Charleston VAMC had more visits than any other VA facility in the country,” said TMH Section Chief Anna Birks, PsyD.

The Charleston VAMC has become a national leader in TMH for three main reasons: (1) Early publishers of research on effectiveness of treatment; (2) Secured research grants to study broader implantation of TMH and effectiveness; and (3) Support from leadership to continue to pursue opportunities of program expansion. In 2010 the Charleston VAMC was awarded the Olin E. Teague Award, VA’s highest honor in recognition of the TMH program and the VAMC’s outstanding achievement in the rehabilitation of war injured Veterans.

There are many factors for the increase of TMH services in the past years within the VA system. One factor is how TMH assists with staffing needs for facilities where recruitment of mental health clinicians can be difficult, such as rural areas. Additionally, the technology

expands the access that Veterans have to the evidenced-based treatment they need to help in recovery and symptom reduction. Two common concerns voiced by Veterans when introduced to TMH surround the safety and effectiveness of TMH. Considerable research has been done in the last 10 years and overall results support the safety, feasibility and effectiveness of TMH.

“I think it’s always important to educate Veterans about the security of videoconferencing,” said Birks. “I explain that sessions are similar to Skype or FaceTime, with better connection and over a secure network which keeps it confidential.”

Along with services from the Charleston VA Medical Center to its surrounding VA Outpatient Clinics, there are several clinical services available through home

TMH Partnership with Fort Stewart

In 2010, Fort Stewart saw an influx of returning combat Veterans, many of whom needed mental health care. But, located in rural Hinesville, Georgia, there were few providers. So, the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center partnered with Fort Stewart to bring outpatient psychiatric services to active duty service members, retirees, and family members through TMH. Since the initial partnership began, the TMH services have expanded to also include support to Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Georgia.

Dr. Joseph Coll is a psychiatrist located in Charleston, South Carolina as a full-time VA employee dedicated to these TMH partnerships with DoD. Coll is a Veteran himself, discharged from the United States Air Force in 2008.

“My experience in the military has helped me connect with Veterans,” said Coll. “The active duty service

members often find comfort speaking with a provider who was in the military and who has deployed.”

Coll along with other Charleston based clinicians provide treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, anxiety, depression, and medication management. Coll himself provides treatment for approximately 80 patients per week through outpatient services and case staffing.

“Outside of the immediate treatments they are being provided, I think the interaction with VA does help them engage with VA after they discharge,” said Coll. “They come away with an understanding that there are clinicians in the VA that have experience in behavioral health. The VA is the leader in treatment for PTSD and TBI outside of the military. I share that information and encourage them to seek out VA services post-discharge.”

Telemental Health

based clinical videoconferencing (HBCVT). For the home based program, the Veteran uses their own computer or tablet to interact with their VA mental health provider through a free, secure program. Currently, for HBCVT the only limiting factor is the Veteran’s access to the internet, however, soon tablets which include 4G internet access will be available for Veterans.

“Home-based TMH is a very convenient option for our patients,” said Post Traumatic Stress Clinical Section Chief Peter Tuerk, PsyD. “Some Veterans use their tablet to have an appointment on their lunch break. We even have some Veterans who are employed as truck drivers and use their tablet to complete their treatments while away from home. HBCVT can be a great opportunity for our patients to engage in treatment, but it does have to be clinically appropriate for the care they need.”



Photos: James Arrowood

SPECIAL DELIVERY

By Meredith Hagen, Lead Public Affairs Specialist

Mail-order pharmacy sends prescriptions directly to Veterans

In a nondescript building in North Charleston, South Carolina, thousands of tiny orange bottles jostle along automated conveyor belts, jockeying for position as they traverse the interior of the 75,000 square foot Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy.

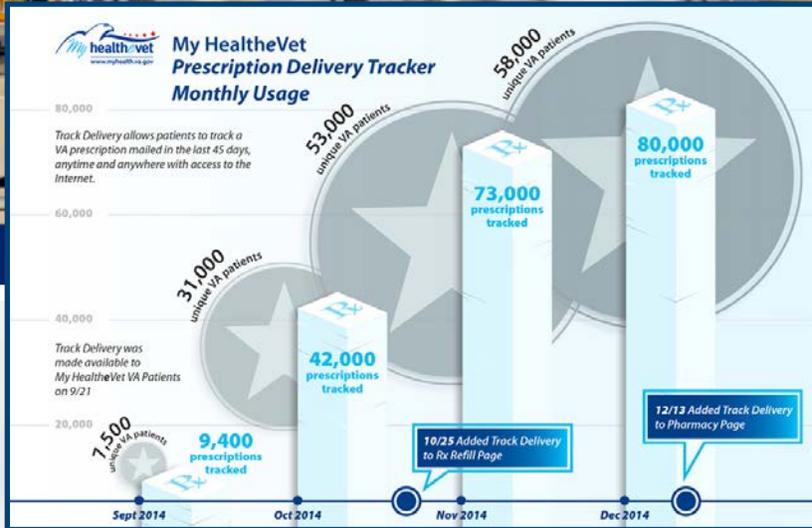
The facility, one of only seven in the entire nation, fills, packages and distributes more than 110,000 prescriptions every day for Veterans residing in the Southeast and elsewhere.

The Charleston CMOP partners with the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center in Charleston to deliver millions of prescriptions to Veterans every year, thus supporting the hospital's in-house pharmacy and expediting refills.

"We fill about 80 percent of the prescriptions needed by Veterans at the Charleston VA Medical Center and the Community Based Outpatient Clinics," said Duane Dunning, Charleston CMOP liaison pharmacist. "Often we have around a 30 hour turn-around time. It usually only takes about two and a half days from the time the Veteran requests the refill to when it's delivered to their mailbox or doorstep."



CMOP employees perform quality control inspections, ensuring each prescription bottle is filled with the correct medication for the patient.



This efficiency means that Veterans are able to count on getting their necessary medications quickly and with very little delay or hassle. Patients no longer have to wait at the hospital or clinic pharmacy to refill prescriptions in person.

The Charleston CMOP is a highly automated facility with numerous established checkpoints and tracking systems in place that ensure patient safety.

“Our goal is to deliver the right medication to the right patient every time,” said Dunning. “We have an excellent track record too. In a typical month, we process 2.3 million prescription orders. Of those, we usually only have two or three dispensing errors, such as the patient receiving the wrong medication, or the wrong number of pills, or a patient receiving a medication they did not order.”

“To put that in perspective, we like to equate it to easily identifiable and sometimes comical statistics,” said CMOP Associate Director Lisa Harle. “For instance, you have a better chance of getting struck by an asteroid, of dating a supermodel, or of being harmed by a toilet seat than you do of getting the wrong prescription or dosage from this CMOP.”

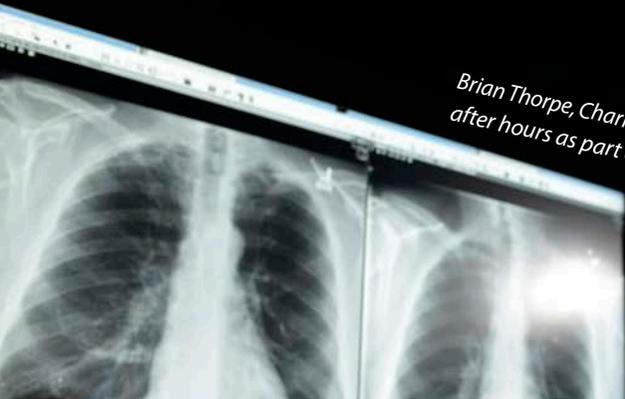
The Charleston CMOP is also one of only two facilities in the country that can fill prescriptions for controlled substances. The Charleston pharmacy handles orders for patients residing east of the Mississippi River, while the CMOP in Murfreesboro, Tennessee processes those being mailed to patients west of the Mississippi, according to Dunning.

Patients have several ways to request refills through the CMOP. They may call in to the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center’s automated system at 843-577-5011, order refills online through VA’s electronic health management system, My HealthVet, or mail in a refill slip.

In September of 2014, the CMOP added the capability to check the status of prescriptions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through the VA’s new online tracker system. Veterans with Advanced or Premium My HealthVet profiles can log in to their accounts and access shipping information, carrier tracking numbers and their prescription histories under the pharmacy tab. While this technology allows Veteran patients to quickly find pertinent information regarding their medications handled by the CMOP, Veterans are also still able to call in to the Charleston VA pharmacy to inquire about the status of their refills.

Last year, the seven VA mail-order pharmacies filled and sent out 117 million prescriptions, according to Kenneth Siehr, national director for CMOP. This year, they are on track to process 121 million orders. Additionally, the CMOPs have recently received the highest customer satisfaction score in a J.D. Power and Associates survey for the fourth year in a row. Veterans ranked their experience with the mail-out pharmacies higher than most civilian brick-and-mortar pharmacies.

“We really offer an invaluable service to Veterans,” Dunning said. “We save them time and energy and safeguard their well-being. Automation is so much safer and is more efficient than manual distribution, which is often riddled with human error. We are proud to do our part for our Veterans and we continue to try and streamline the process every day – making it quicker, more cost-effective and safer for the patients.”

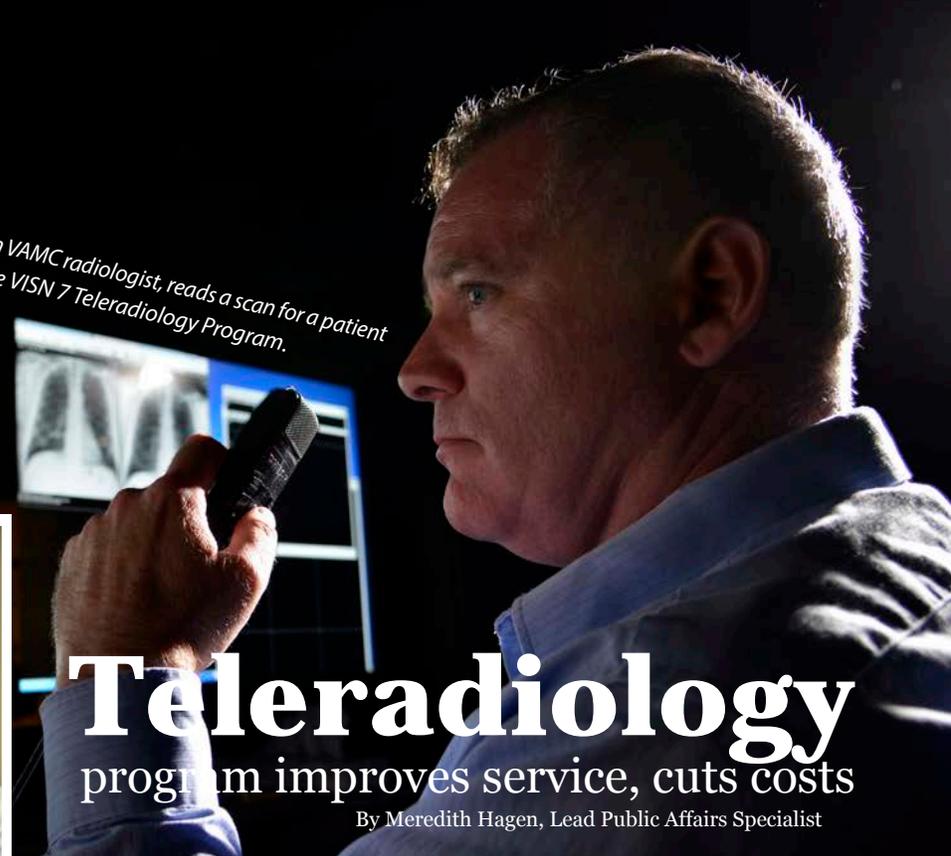


Brian Thorpe, Charleston VAMC radiologist, reads a scan for a patient after hours as part of the VISN 7 Teleradiology Program.



Photos: James Arrowood

Lisa Moore, PACS manager, Andrew Barden, Radiology Service administrative officer, and Richard Vermillion, teleradiology program coordinator, have been instrumental in initiating and maintaining the teleradiology cost-saving program.



Teleradiology

program improves service, cuts costs

By Meredith Hagen, Lead Public Affairs Specialist

Swing by the Radiology Department at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center after hours, long after the hallways have darkened and most of the staff have gone home for the evening, and you will find a couple of dedicated radiologists sitting in a darkened room and analyzing scans for patients located not only in Charleston, but across the Southeast.

Last year, the VISN 7 Teleradiology Program was created at the Charleston VAMC with the goal of reducing local and regional costs by decreasing the number of radiological studies that are sent to providers outside of the VA

system to be read, while also improving patient care through a reduction in turn-around time.

“I initially conceived this project when reviewing the bills that were being generated across the VISN for teleradiology services,” said Chief of Radiology Service Alexander Dibona, MD. “At that time we were using a third party vendor and the costs were astronomical. It occurred to me that we should be able to provide at least a part of that service for the VISN at much lower cost. We already had a great deal of the needed infrastructure in place in the form of workstations and related hardware components. We just weren’t using that equipment at night and if we could get some radiologists in house overnight we should be able to make very cost effective use of existing equipment.”

The program went live in October 2014 with radiologists reading local studies as well as some routine cases for Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System in Alabama, which was experiencing a radiology backlog at that time.

Now, the teleradiologists read routine studies for the Carl Vinson VA Medical

Center in Dublin, Georgia and the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center in Tuscaloosa, Alabama and will begin reading scans for patients from the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center in Augusta, Georgia soon.

“Our radiologists read between 100 and 150 scans per night,” said Andrew Barden, administrative officer for Charleston VAMC’s Radiology Service. “We are also the only VISN currently operating a VISN-wide teleradiology program housed within a local medical center.”

Through July of 2015, the program has created a cost savings for the region of \$610,600 and has read approximately 15,450 studies. And those numbers and savings continue to rise.

“For Charleston the benefits of this program are the potential for revenue generation,” said Dibona. “By having in-house radiologists, we no longer have a need for overnight teleradiology, which saves us money. For other facilities, this program has allowed them to reduce wait times for interpretations and has cleared a backlog of unread cases in some instances. All of this is provided for free via VISN grant funding and once we begin billing for our services we will do so for less than’s currently charged by their prior outside teleradiology services.”



My HealthVet Coordinator Heather Friesen reviews guidelines with Emerson Beach, a Veteran and volunteer with the program, to help enroll Veterans on-site.

Wouldn't it be nice if you could view your own health record right from your own computer? Well you can with My HealthVet! My HealthVet is a web-based resource for Veterans, service members, their dependents and caregivers to access personal VA health records.

premium account offers the additional benefits of viewing appointments, lab test results, VA notes from the Veteran's health care record, and secure messaging.

The benefit of secure messaging is that it really engages the Veteran as an active partner in their health care. Secure messaging allows the Veteran to communicate non-urgent, non-emergent health-related information directly to their VA health care team. The system can be used to relate needs such as prescription renewals, test results or to schedule an appointment.

"Secure messaging is convenient to the Veterans," said Friesen. "They can message on their own time, as soon as they recognize they have a need—even if that means 11:00 p.m."

Secure messaging with the health care team also provides the Veteran with timely responses. The VA health care team is guaranteed to respond within three business days.

"With secure messaging you can get to your doctor right away," said 81-year-old Navy Veteran Ronald Keeler. "I messaged my health care team at 8:00 a.m. one morning to renew a prescription, had a reply by noon, and medication at my house two days later."

"My HealthVet gives the Veteran anywhere, anytime access to their health care," said Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center's My HealthVet Coordinator Heather Friesen. "The system helps the Veteran stay involved in their health care and gives them access to their own information."

Any VA patient who registers is automatically enrolled in an advanced account. The advanced account allows for the immediate capability to refill prescriptions. One step further is the premium account. To gain access to the premium account, the Veteran must complete an in-person authentication form. This form is available at the check-in desk at any VA outpatient clinic or at the Charleston VAMC in room B122. The

My healthvet

provides online access to health records

By Erin Curran,
Public Affairs
Specialist

Heather Friesen assists a Veteran through the My HealthVet enrollment process.

For additional information you can visit www.myhealth.va.gov or call the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center's My HealthVet Coordinator at 843-789-6880.

For urgent medical needs, contact the Telephone Advice Program (TAP line) at 843-789-6400.



Veterans invited to enroll in VLER to share medical records

By Meredith Hagen, Lead Public Affairs Specialist

Connect Your Docs



How to Enroll

Online:

Enroll through eBenefits or My HealthVet

- <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov>
- <https://access.va.gov/accessva/>

In Person

- Download and print VA Form 10-0485
- Hand deliver the form to the Charleston Release of Information Office

By Mail

- Download and print VA Form 10-0485
- Mail your form to:
Ralph H. Johnson VAMC
Release of Information Office
109 Bee Street
Charleston, SC 29401

A common scenario: You're sitting in the doctor's office rattling off a long list of current medications that you are taking and relaying all of the past surgeries you've had and visits to specialists that you've made in the past few months. It's cumbersome but a necessary step in receiving safe, quality health care. But now, imagine that you could opt in to share all of this information with your doctor digitally over a secure system.

The Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record allows you to do just that.

The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center has partnered with local community hospitals across the region to share patient health care information electronically. VLER simplifies health care by giving VA doctors quick access to medical records from non-VA providers when Veterans seek care in the community. The sharing helps clinicians make more informed decisions regarding a Veteran's treatment plan because it can potentially fill gaps in the patient's health history.

"With the implementation of the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act in August of 2014, more Veterans now

have the opportunity to seek care outside of the VA system if they live more than 40 miles from the nearest VA facility or cannot be seen within 30 days at their chosen medical center or clinic," said Charleston VA Medical Center Director Scott Isaacks. "This means that, now more than ever, our Veterans and their clinicians will depend on the unique sharing capabilities that VLER provides."

The Ralph H. Johnson VAMC connects with other medical facilities in South Carolina through the South Carolina Health Information Exchange. SCHIEx partners include Medical University of South Carolina, Roper St. Francis Healthcare, South Carolina Department of Mental Health and Department of Social Services, Family Health Centers Inc. as well as many others.

Veterans are required to opt in to the program in order to have their information securely shared electronically. To do this, Veterans can fill out VA Form 10-0485 and return it to the Charleston VAMC Release of Information Office or submit the form online to be enrolled. More information can be found at www.va.gov/VLER/ or by calling 1-877-771-VLER (8537).



Training Veterans for a New Career

By Erin Curran, Public Affairs Specialist

Two programs at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center – Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) and Sterile Processing Services (SPS) – have teamed up to create a valuable opportunity for Veterans to gain on-the-job education and training in Charleston, South Carolina.

CWT is designed to assist Veterans who are not ready to seek immediate competitive employment due to significant barriers to obtaining and maintaining gainful employment in the community. SPS employees have direct responsibility for cleaning, disinfecting, and sterilizing scopes, equipment, and instruments, for educating

others on reusable medical equipment regulations and process, and for ensuring the departments have adequate number and type of equipment and supplies necessary to perform direct care activities.

“As our VA organization continues to evolve and prosper, so should our efforts to support education and training for our Veterans,” said Sterile Processing Chief Rodney Hicks. “The support of the SPS staff is essential in the program’s success. They provide on-the-job training and oversight to ensure the CWT trainees are performing within their assignments. The moral support and structured work environment prepare the CWT trainees for employment.”

The majority of CWT assignments lasts four to six months, however the assignment in SPS is a full year, and highly desired among the CWT trainees. The extended assignment allows the Veteran to gain enough experience to be eligible for a national exam to become a Certified Registered Medical Supply Technician—a resume builder they can take with them anywhere.

“I feel that the certification is the greatest contribution this program makes to Veterans’ recovery and move towards independence,” said CWT Supervisor Joan Dunn. “It gives those Veterans who complete the requirements a skill set that can be applied at the VA or any healthcare center and an opportunity to pursue a new career.”

Since the program began in 2011, there have been four trainees, three have gone on to become Certified Registered Medical Supply Technicians and one is waiting to sit for the national exam. Two former trainees are now full time employees at the Charleston VAMC. This year the program will graduate three CWT trainees: Thomas Gilliard, James Alexander and Ray DeLoach.

“The program has been the greatest thing that has ever happened to me,” said CWT Trainee Ray DeLoach. “It has helped me move forward in life. After graduation I hope to be hired in SPS and then get my national certification.”

Hicks and Dunn have shared the successes of their program with the goal that the CWT training in SPS can be implemented throughout other facilities nationally.



Medical Foster Home PROGRAM OFFERS CARE AT HOME

By Erin Curran, Public Affairs Specialist



At the age of 81, U.S. Army Veteran Lawrence Moore, found himself living alone in an unsafe neighborhood with poor nutrition and inadequate medical care. Fortunately for Moore, there was a woman out in the community committed to care for Veterans in her own home—bringing Veterans in and making them a part of her family.

She provides good home cooked meals, I like her lima beans, fish, cabbage and greens."





Photos: James Arrowood

“They served their country, now it’s our time to serve them—and I’ll never give up on them,” said Rose Doctor, caregiver with the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center’s Medical Foster Home Program.

MFH is an alternative to a nursing home for Veterans who are no longer able to safely live independently. The program helps connect Veterans with caregivers in the community that are willing to open up their home and serve in the role of a strong family member, providing Veterans with a safe environment for healthy aging.

Along with other requirements, MFH caregivers must have some prior caregiving experience whether formal or informal. That experience can range from caring for an aging family member to previous work as a registered nurse. Additionally, all homes are inspected and certified initially and annually by a VA inspection team consisting of a VA fire and safety officer, dietician, nurse, social worker and rehabilitative specialist.

“The care provided in a MFH is a better level of care than typically provided in a nursing home and it’s at a lower cost to the Veteran,” said MFH Coordinator, Natasha Simeon-Major. “Veterans are receiving one-on-one care by someone solely dedicated to their needs.”

Medical Foster homes are generally distinguished from assisted living or other Community Residential Care homes in the following ways:

1. The home is owned or rented by the MFH caregiver who lives in the MFH and provides personal care and supervision
2. All Veterans in MFH meet a nursing home level of care need
3. In South Carolina, currently no more than one MFH resident is allowed per home
4. MFH residents are enrolled in a VA interdisciplinary home care program

These factors facilitate matching suitable MFHs with the greater complexity of this subset of Veterans, achieving safe and therapeutic care in a small personal home.

The level of care and attention provided in a MFH has proven results in the Charleston area program. When Moore made the move to Doctor’s home located in St. Stephens, South Carolina in February 2015 he was a frail 121 pounds. His previous diet consisted mainly of lunch meat and snack foods and even that was not always available. Just three months after daily meals provided by Doctor, Moore has gained a healthy 11 pounds.

MFH works in conjunction with the Home-Base Primary Care team to provide

the in-home medical care needed by aging Veterans. The HBPC team consists of a physician, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, physical therapist, pharmacist, social worker, dietician, and recreational therapist. These Charleston VAMC clinicians provide scheduled and unscheduled visits to monitor the ongoing health needs of Veterans in their MFH. The team also provides continuing education for the caregiver to best meet individualized needs for their Veteran.

A part of health aging is companionship, and the MFH provides that piece of the puzzle too.

“We play board games together, go to church and I love to be around her grandkids,” said Moore. “She even threw me a surprise 82nd birthday and invited my grandsons—that made me feel good.”

“People are what really matter,” said Doctor. “To be there for someone in their time of need is more important than anything.”

In 2008, Congress set aside \$9 million for the program which has led to expansion in 114 VA medical centers in 45 states and territories with plans to continue that growth.



Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center
109 Bee Street
Charleston, SC 29401

PRSR STD
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Important VA Phone Numbers

Charleston VA Medical Center

843-577-5011 or toll-free 1-888-878-6884 or
TTY: 843-789-6888

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 or toll-free at 1-888-878-6884
Veterans who need to request a refill of a prescription or check the status of refills can call 24 hours a day, 7 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.

Veterans Crisis Line

1-800-273-TALK (8255), Press 1 for Veterans
Veterans can call the Veterans Crisis Line to talk to trained professionals 24 hours a day, seven days a week or visit www.veteranscrisisline.net

My HealthVet

www.myhealth.va.gov
Veterans can manage their health by logging onto My HealthVet, which offers access to Veteran health benefits and services.



For more information on VA related topics, visit www.charleston.va.gov. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

