



Proud of our Veterans,
Proud of America!

THE epicenter

Newsletter of the VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS) • January 2003

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday

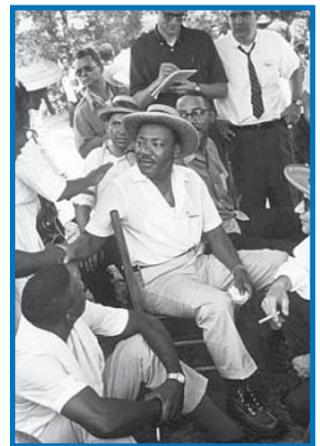
VA proudly joins the Nation in observing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday anniversary on the third Monday of January. Dr. King was born on January 15, 1929, and each year we celebrate what has now become an American tradition – the observance of a national holiday honoring Dr. King. The Federal holiday will be celebrated on January 20, 2003, and the national theme will be “Remember! Celebrate! Act! A Day On, Not A Day Off!”

Live the legacy — don't just sleep in on this holiday! Make it a day on, not a day off, by volunteering to help your community! Get involved! Clean up a school, Remove graffiti, prepare and serve meals at a homeless shelter, stock a food bank or clothing pantry, become a tutor or mentor a young adult, teach a child to read, run errands for a home-bound individual, help a non-profit organization!

The 2003 King Holiday Observance will mark the seventy-fourth birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the thirty-fifth Annual King Center Program, and the seventeenth anniversary of the National Holiday in his honor. This holiday is now celebrated in some form in more than 100 countries around the world.

On April 8, 1968 - four days after Dr. King was assassinated - Congressman John Conyers (D-Mich) introduced the first legislation providing for a federal holiday. But that dream wasn't

realized until nearly 20 years later. All through the 1970's and 80's controversy surrounded the idea of a Martin Luther King Day. Congressional representatives and citizens had petitioned the President to make January 15, Martin Luther King's birthday, a federal legal holiday. Others wanted to make the holiday on the day he died...while some people did not want to have a holiday at all. January 15 had been observed as a legal holiday for many years in 27 states and Washington, D.C. Finally, in 1986, President Ronald Reagan declared the third Monday in January a federal legal holiday commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday. However, it was not until 1999 that the holiday was celebrated by all 50 states.



VA is in a unique position to carry on Dr. King's legacy of helping others on a daily basis. Our veterans and their families are our priority, and the people who serve them are some of our most treasured resources. The VA Palo Alto Health Care System is committed to ensuring that equal employment opportunity is carried out through the hiring, promotion, and advancement of a diverse workforce.

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A Word From Our Director



I hope all of you enjoyed the holiday season and are prepared for what is certain to be an exciting and challenging new year in 2003. The status of our VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS) Fiscal Year 2003 budget is still unknown. We hope to have more definitive information whether the budget originally anticipated for the Veterans Health Administration will come to fruition after Congress reconvenes in mid-January. I appreciate your patience throughout this period of uncertainty.

We celebrated the grand re-opening of the Sonora Clinic on December 16, 2002. A large number of Palo Alto based staff made the journey to be part of this event despite the ominous weather forecast. The new clinic space is simply beautiful thanks to the efforts of many of our talented staff. My special thanks go to Vickie Baker for coordinating the ceremony that day and thanks to all the staff who had a role in coordinating the clinic move. I also want to congratulate Dr. Ellen Shibata and Robert Goldman for their continued leadership in meeting the needs of veterans at our Valley Clinic sites.

Our VAPAHCS CARES (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) Committee, led by Jason Nietupski, facility planner, has made significant progress on addressing the six planning initiatives (projected gaps or overlaps in service in 2012 and 2022) the National CARES planning Office has assigned to us. Those planning initiatives include the following:

Our VAPAHCS CARES (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) Committee, led by Jason Nietupski, facility planner, has made significant progress on addressing the six planning initiatives (projected gaps or overlaps in service in 2012 and 2022) the National CARES planning Office has assigned to us. Those planning initiatives include the following:

- Increase Acute Care Access (53% of our veterans meet the access standard versus the required 65%)
- Address proximity with San Francisco VAMC (two tertiary care facilities within 120 miles)
- Increase in Primary Care (Workload projected to increase by 77,000 stops by 2012)
- Increase in Specialty Care (Workload projected to increase by 83,000 stops by 2012)
- Decrease in Medicine Beds (Demand projected to decrease by 30 beds by 2022)

- Decrease in Surgery Beds (Demand projected to decrease by 26 beds by 2022)

The strategic planning work described in last month's newsletter has been the foundation for developing our proposed solutions. We reviewed these proposed solutions to the planning initiatives at the December 12, 2002, town hall meeting. We will have extensive discussions at the VISN level the first week of January and will have more information to share in late January. If you have comments or concerns regarding any aspect of the CARES process, please contact Bill Ball, VAPAHCS Communications Officer, at extension 64888.

We continue to receive newly evolving information regarding the VA's role in pre-event smallpox vaccination planning. While we are participating fully in vaccination planning with Santa Clara County, we may or may not receive our own supply of vaccine directly from the VA. VA Central Office will make that determination in the near future. In either case, we have identified ten providers as the first stage of our planning to be part of the Vaccine Teams (in the event VA staff administer the vaccinations) or Vaccination Monitoring Teams (in the event county staff administer the vaccinations). We are collecting names of approximately 100 additional staff members from specified disciplines who would comprise our Smallpox Health Care Team. All staff participation in these activities would be strictly voluntary. We held town hall meetings on December 18, 2002, and were delighted to have Dr. Marty Fensterseib, the Santa Clara County Health Officer, participate in one of these meetings. We have posted all the questions and answers provided at those meetings on the vapaweb for your information. My thanks to Rae Denison, Dr. Mark Holodny, Gina Oda and Judith Rosen for their tireless work in our preparedness activities.

As you can see, FY 2003 will be presenting many unique challenges for us. I appreciate your willingness to respond to these numerous demands on our time and resources and your commitment to our mission.

In closing, congratulations to the ten VAPAHCS staff selected to attend the first joint VISN 21/22 Leadership Development Institute. They are:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Tracy Dekelboum, SCI Service | Alice Espindola, Medicine Service |
| Liz Jessen, WBRC | Brian Kelly, Fiscal Service |
| Pat McFarlin, Nursing Service | Ken Owens, Business Office |
| Lori Peery, COS Office | Larry Price, A&MM Service |
| Lori Russo, GRECC | Katranger Thompson, Social Work Service |

Congratulations to all!

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Elizabeth Joyce Freeman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elizabeth Joyce Freeman
Director

VISN 21 South Coast Market – CARES Planning Initiatives

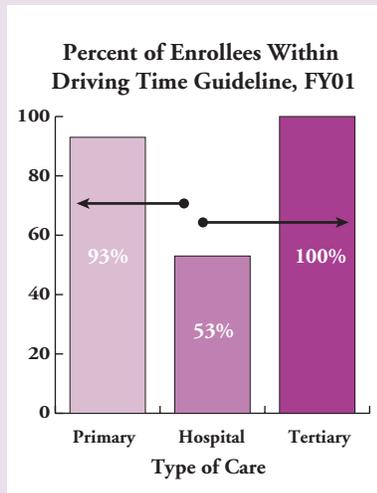
Access:

Primary Care: 93% of the veterans residing within the Market are within the Access Standard

Hospital Care*: 53% of the veterans residing within the Market are within the Access Standard

Tertiary Care: 100% of the veterans residing within the Market are within the Access Standard

* Identified as a CARES Planning Initiative.



Arrows in chart represent the Travel Time Guideline.

VISN 21 South Coast Market CARES Planning Initiatives

CARES Workload Category	Type of Gap	FY2012 Gap	FY2012 % Var.	FY2022 Gap	FY2022 % Var.	Workload Criteria*
Outpt. Specialty Care	Population Based	+84,207	+67%	+41,522	+33%	+/- 30,000
	Treating Facility	+82,551	+63%	+40,464	+31%	
Outpt. Primary Care	Population Based	+76,750	+60%	+25,572	+20%	+/- 26,000
	Treating Facility	+76,868	+60%	+25,994	+20%	
Inpt. Medicine	Population Based	-12	-19%	-26	-40%	+/- 20
	Treating Facility	-12	-15%	-30	-37%	
Inpt. Surgery	Population Based	-12	-36%	-18	-54%	+/- 20
	Treating Facility	-17	-34%	-26	-52%	

*NOTES: Significant Gaps are determined by first applying a percentage change criteria (+/-25%) for each CARES Category. If the gap meets this threshold, then it must meet the workload threshold criteria (beds for inpatient categories and stops for outpatient categories).

GRECC and HBPC Form Partnership for AHEAD II Project

In collaboration with 20 other VA Medical Centers, our GRECC Geriatric Clinic and HBPC have successfully completed the initial 6 months of a project designed to provide better end-of-life care to patients with dementia, especially those in the home or community setting. AHEAD II, Advances in Home Based Primary Care for End of Life in Advancing Dementia, focused on two goals:

- To establish 100% documentation of Advance Directives of patients identified with dementia in HBPC and GRECC Geriatric Clinic within six months
- To decrease caregiver burden by 50% over a six month time period

To accomplish these goals, three members of the GRECC/HBPC team attended a training session last April where they learned how to utilize the PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act) cycle to initiate and evaluate change quickly. Now, their current practice guideline is to address advance directives within the first two home or clinic visits and document any discussion related to this issue.

In order to achieve their second goal, they utilized a caregiver burden measure similar to a 0-10 thermometer to rate caregiver burden.

A caregiver phone-in support group was offered once a week for six weeks and was facilitated by the HBPC and GRECC social workers. While their findings showed that caregiver stress is not static, all caregivers who completed an evaluation questionnaire indicated that this intervention:

- Allowed them to talk about their frustrations.
- Helped them to learn how others cope and deal with their problems.
- Helped them to learn about community resources
- Helped them to learn that other people share some of the same concerns or problems as they do
- Helped decrease their feelings of stress and burden during the week

The group also developed two handout tools, one that lists Caregiver Resources and a Glossary of Terms. These have proved helpful in the team's ongoing support and education of caregivers of veterans with dementia. For more information contact Betty Wexler RN, CNS GRECC Geriatric Clinic at ext. 64143.

EMPLOYEE NEWS

New Employees

Acquisition & Materiel Mgmt.

Kenneth D. James
Manue Salvatera

Anesthesiology Svc.

Jeff Grenzke
Pamela Storrer

Business Office

Michael D. Scott

Canteen Svc.

Hoa Thuy Hang

Domiciliary

George Kennedy

Environmental Mgmt. Svc.

Rudolph Aguilar
James U. Metters

Nursing Svc.

Freddie Batarao
Auro Demeterio
Carmelit Ermino
Ratan Kumar

Nursing Svc. (cont'd)

Reina Lopez
Phuong Tat
Lornado Welcome
Chri Wickersham

Nutrition & Food Svc.

Marilyn Magness

Pharmacy Svc.

Mahin Azerang

Police Svc.

Samantha Ross

Psychiatry Svc.

Doopyo A. Hong

Psychology Svc.

Rache Kimerling

Research Svc.

Dong Yu

Social Work Svc.

Laureen Vernon

Retirees

Environmental Mgmt. Svc.

Karl Johnson (14)

Nursing Svc.

Jack Bittle (35)

Pharmacy Svc.

Nhon Huynh (10)

(Years of service are indicated in parentheses.)



Employee Service Awards

10 Years

Todd Anhalt
Dermatology Svc.

Odela Bretana
Nursing Svc.

Miriam Emanuel
Blind Rehabilitation Center

Whuida Lardizabal
Nursing Svc.

Philip Lavori
Research Svc.

Daniel Nakamura
Blind Rehabilitation Center

Kim-Lien Nguyen
Pharmacy Svc.

Lisa Solomon
Social Work Svc.

15 Years

Maureen Blair
Nursing Svc.

Dolores Dahlen
Nursing Svc.

Nellie Fallorina
Nursing Svc.

Chiou-Big Lin
Nursing Svc.

Albert Steunenberg
Dental Svc.

20 Years

Rosemary Gill
Medical Svc.

Stanford Rossiter
Radiology Svc.

Ki Ok Yi
Business Office

Mark Zemke
Blind Rehabilitation Center

25 Years

Marianne Reese
Nursing Svc.

Fidel Tadas
Nursing Svc.

30 Years

Steven Darrow
Acquisition & Materiel Mgmt.

Vincent Hentz
Surgical Svc.

Francisco Ordillo
Fiscal Svc.

Philip Wong
Information Resource Mgmt.

35 Years

Judith Kane-Campbell
Acquisition & Materiel Mgmt.

Paul Troop
Nursing Svc.



Tony J. Fitzgerald Receives Top Environmental Champion Award



Tony J. Fitzgerald, Chief, Environmental Management Service was recognized as a recipient of the Environmental Program Service (EPS), Top Environmental Champion Award during the September 27, 2002, EPS Assembly in Reno, Nevada.

The TOP Environmental Champion Award was established for the purpose of recognizing significant and singular dedication in Championing efforts, which will benefit the discipline of Health Care Environmental Service. The acronym, TOP, stands for “Towards Optimum Performance.”

Best Practice Provider of Choice: Restraint Reduction in Mental Health at VAPA/HCS

Prior to the advent of anti-psychotic medications in the mid-1950s physical restraint was one of only a very few mechanisms available to staff for controlling aggressive and self-harming behaviors of patients with serious mental disorders.

Even as drug treatments became more sophisticated and effective over time the use of behavioral restraint remained commonplace and routine. However, restraints use is associated with many serious and unfortunate consequences, such as disability related to aspiration, pulmonary complications, diminished circulation, and skin breakdown.

At VAPA we've tracked restraint use over decades and focused on policies and procedures to insure patient and staff safety when restraints were utilized.

Based upon guidelines proposed by HCFA in 1999 and later mandated by JCAHO, we began to consider ways to:

- Aim toward a restraint free environment at VAPA
- Provide greater assurance of safety and protection of patients in restraints.

Many new systems were put into place to accomplish this:

- Interdisciplinary task forces were formed to revise the Patient Restraint Policy, making such changes as: eliminating room

seclusion, requiring continuous observation of all restrained individuals, requiring direct physician evaluation when restraints were utilized, and considering restraint as an emergency procedure to be utilized only when other interventions have failed. In addition, an interdisciplinary team with patient participation now reviews every restraint episode.

- Required documentation of restraint episodes was revised to create more comprehensive, user-friendly, time-efficient documentation tools.
- Increased interdisciplinary staff training was implemented with annual reviews, nursing competencies, and in-services of all staff to policy changes. Clinical staff, as well as the VA Police, was involved in training.

Results: There has been a major reduction in the use of restraints, in both number of incidents and number of hours, particularly during the past year. This is particularly striking in view of the fact that in March 2001 inpatient Mental Health adopted a non-smoking policy. While the fears had been that patients would be upset when they couldn't smoke, an unexpected byproduct of this was accelerated reduction of restraint use on inpatient units.

You Make a Difference!

Submitted by our veterans and their families. We welcome more contributions from LVD, Stockton, Modesto, San Jose, and Monterey.

The efficient manner in which **Dr. Peter Johannet** and **Dr. Michael Bogdan** (PAD), Surgical Service, explained my care plan and follow-up treatment reflected compassion and understanding of the task at hand. My wife was called at home and given a complete report after each surgery. They even assisted with Hometel reservations and other logistical matters. This "Go the Extra Mile" was sincerely appreciated.

So very often in service to the public we hear only the negative and the positive. Therefore, I would be remiss if I did not express a warm thank you for the courteous and efficient service I received at the VA Livermore. This was my first visit to the VA and I was impressed with the manner and sincerity of **Barbara Cunningham, R.N.** (LVD), Medical Service. She made time to answer my query regarding my personal need. She arranged more testing and assured me she would call me regarding the results. During my waiting time to board the van back to Modesto, I had time to take a quick snack at the Canteen. I was further impressed with the sincere and courteous manner of the employees I asked directions to get from one station to another.

I am a female veteran and I was recently discharged from the VA Hospital in Palo Alto. I am so grateful to receive the care of two nurses, namely **Sujaun Cai** (San Jose Clinic), Extended Care and Geriatrics, and **Barbara Bradley** (San Jose Clinic), Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service. I am gradually getting better. Not only are they experts in their field, but they are warm and friendly and I look forward to their next visit. Thank you so much for providing this service.

I just wanted to drop you a line to let you know how much I appreciate the VA Respite Programs run by **Karen Brown, R.N.** (San Jose Clinic) Nursing Service and **Jean Bell** (MPD), Social Work Service. Both of these programs have dramatically improved the lives of my father, myself, and my family. I am at peace knowing that Dad will have a chance to socialize with others his own age, fellow vets, while I work. I don't worry about him being at home alone all the time. For Dad, it helps him keep his sanity and gives him a much deserved break from the large extended family that he now lives with. These programs are vitally important to all of us and I want you to know that. Thank you from a very grateful family member.

Shirley Paulson Selected as Chief Nurse for Medicine, Surgery and Critical Care

Shirley Paulson, RN, CCRN, MPA has been selected as the Chief Nurse for Medicine, Surgery and Critical Care for the VA Palo Alto Health Care System. She has held the Acting role since February 2002; prior to this promotion she was the Nurse Manager for the Medical Surgical ICU (MSICU) and the Intermediate ICU (IICU) for the past eight years. Ms. Paulson will be responsible for the overall management and leadership of the acute care inpatient units that include the MSICU, IICU, and wards 2A, 3C and 4A. Her responsibilities include acute care program planning and development, budgetary and fiscal control operations, retention and recruitment, and supervision of the inpatient Case Managers as well as the GM&S Community Health Coordinators.

Prior to coming to the VAPAHCS, Ms. Paulson served for four years as the Nurse Manager of the Spinal Cord Injury Unit at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center. Prior to this, she was an ICU staff nurse at Stanford University Medical Center for a total of 15 years. During this time, she was a Critical Care Transport nurse as well as a critical care educator in the Med/Surg/Trauma ICU. Ms. Paulson earned her BSN and her Master of Public Administration degree from California State University, Hayward. She lives in Fremont with her husband, her two sons, and her Australian Cattle dog.



What New Year's Resolution Do You Have for VAPAHCS?



Received from Clarence Baptista, Voluntary Service Specialist

“The VA will complete more than the required emergency preparedness drills during the next year. These drills will be unannounced and will consist of drills concerning terrorism, lost patients, earthquakes and fires. One drill per every tow months will be completed. All Service Chiefs will be notified only five minutes before the drill starts and will send at least two employees to each drill. After the drill a critique sheet will be handed out to all participants for suggestions to better the next drill.”



Received from Jon Fuller, MD, Co-director Extended Care Service

“I am really proud of the quality of care that our medical center offers to Veterans. My hope for a New Year's resolution is that we continue the mission of providing quality care to its utmost goal, particularly as we participate in the care of those writing the final chapter of their lives.”



Received from Judy Schwab, LVN, BCMA Coordinator

“I would like to see departments work together better and form a team for problem solving issues rather than continue to say it is someone else's problem. We need to loose the blame game philosophy and see what each individual and service can do to better help each other and problem-solve issues. We also need to realize that the divisions of VAPAHCS are parts of a whole and one division does not have more importance than another.”



Received from Lori Webster, Program Assistant

“I would like to see VA Palo Alto Health Care System maintain and continue to advance with our incredible performance measure standards (highest in the VA!). I would also truly love to see enhanced momentum regarding upward mobility (position advancement/succession) for our employees. I believe in what we are achieving here, and it would only strengthen our endeavors by retaining and promoting the first-rate employees who have helped us attain our goals...VAPAHCS = Employer of Choice!!!”



Received from Marie White, Nurse Professional Standards Board Secretary

“I would like to see the health care system be more supportive of employee support systems, such as making job sharing more readily available and allowing flexible work schedules whenever possible, especially in areas where staff already are staying over beyond their scheduled tour. I would also like to see more support from both managers and co-workers for staff members with light duty limitations. Too often I think there is a lack of sensitivity for those who cannot take a full nursing assignment due to an injury or illness. There is peer pressure to ignore their limitations and complete full care assignments.”



January Word Search

G O O D L D K C P O S I C T V E
 T H O U G K C U L D O O G C U P
 M G O O D H E A N E N Y E A O S
 S A B P R O S P E F C O N S S I
 I F R I E N D Y I G A L I P R A
 Y A E T O U T D H O U T H O P E
 N M A E I W E O U F I F U L E I
 E I K P O N S I K V T I V E A P
 W L H F C O L N E W Y E A R C F
 D Y A E P O A U G I V E T H E R K
 I E B N D H O Y T I B R E A D K
 F A I E T H O U G H T F U L M Y
 A M T R O G P R A Y E R D E N E
 M I L G A A O C E A P R H A B I
 B I T Y D F A I L Y L O K L O D
 L O V E P R O E R O M E L I M S
 I G O O D H E A L T H S M I N L
 M O P R O S P E R I T Y H A B G

Find the following words in the letters above:

Break habit
 Confidence
 Energy
 Family

New Year
 Peace
 Positive
 Prayer

Forgive
 Friend
 Good health
 Good luck
 Martin Luther King

Prosperity
 Smile more
 Thankful
 Thoughtful
 Yoga



is published monthly
 by and for employees of the
 VA Palo Alto Health Care System.

Submissions should be received by
 the 1st working day of the month to
 be included in upcoming issues.
 Due to space limitations, it is not
 possible to publish all submissions.

We welcome any comments,
 suggestions or story ideas
 you may have; please contact the
 Communications Officer (00A) at
 ext. 64888 or directly at
 650-858-3925.

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Since I can never keep
 them, I decided not to
 make any resolutions
 this new year.

You're a spineless jellyfish
 of a human being, Bob, so
 it's no wonder you can't
 keep your New Year's
 resolutions!



Deep inside Bob wondered what
 Nancy *really* felt about him.

Remember These February Holidays

February 2nd
 Groundhog Day

February 14th
 St. Valentine's Day

February 17th
 President's Day