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From The Director



One of the promises we made to you for 2017 is improving communication of news and information on items that directly impact you and your healthcare. As part of this initiative, our Public Affairs staff, along with our Health Promotion Disease Prevention Committee, has developed this quarterly newsletter to provide Veterans, their family members and caregivers with news and information on activities, events and initiatives tied directly to improved health and well-being.

We have made tremendous progress over the past year to better-serve our Veterans. We now offer access to Same-Day Services in Primary Care and Mental Health for Veterans with urgent needs. We have also greatly reduced Electronic Wait List (appointments with availability greater than 90 days) from more than 2,000 in November 2015 to approximately 115 – with a majority waiting the availability of care in the community.

Over the same period, we have reduced the average wait time for pending appointments in Primary Care and Specialty Care. As of March 15, 89.93 percent of our pending appointments were scheduled within 30 days. This may not seem like a monumental feat, but we accomplished this while the

number of appointments climbed from 58,316 to 86,005 between November 2015 and in March 2017. Much of our progress comes from growing and maturing as a 24/7 health care system. However, I would be remiss if I didn't highlight the teamwork and innovation going on behind the scenes by staff members who are committed to increasing access while simultaneously improving the timeliness and quality of care. We know things are not perfect and have pockets where wait times and availability of services (both locally and within the community) exceed the expected standard. But, please know that we will continue to address these items as best we can.

In closing, I ask that you do three things: **1) Know Your Numbers** -- if you are in a high-risk category for a certain ailment or disease, work with us on instituting and following a proper plan of care. **2) Practice Preventative Medicine** – participate in recommended screenings and immunizations so we can reduce your chances of illness and hospitalization. **3) Become an Informed Advocate** – partner with us in the delivery of your care by learning about services we offer to help you maintain a healthy lifestyle.

On behalf of our 2,300 team members (**42 percent of whom are Veterans**) thank you for entrusting us with your care and making “Every Day Veterans Day” here at the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System.

Peggy Kearns
Director/CEO

VA2K Run/Walk May 17, 2017 11a.m. – 1p.m.



VA2K helps Veterans and staff members remember that regular routine exercise helps maintain a healthy body and mind. Many donations are given to the Homeless Veterans Programs through Voluntary Services to help with household cleaning and laundry.



This yearly event is to encourage Veterans and employees at all levels of fitness to join in a fun, short walk while benefiting homeless Veterans. A VA2K is short enough that even slow walkers could complete it within a 30-minute lunch break.

For More Information:

Lori Winchell

(702) 791-9000 ext.53081

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Thanks to Food & Nutrition and all who supported in putting on an excellent Nutrition Skills Fair and Culinary Competition at the Medical Center March 8. We would like to thank All our registered Dietitians and Nutritionists for what you do daily to assist Veterans with healthy eating and healthy living. Also, congratulations to Karen Diiullo-Estabrook – our first Culinary Skills Competition Champion as well as our other competitors: Mike Johnson, Romy Schnitzer-Cook and Peggy Kearns.

National Nutrition Month

This year's theme is
"Put Your Best Fork Forward"



March was National Nutrition Month. this year's theme is "Put Your Best Fork Forward." The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics theme serves to remind us that we all hold the tool to make better, healthier food choices. Make one small change to your diet this month to take a step toward taking control of your health and nutrition. Talk with your VA dietitian for tips on making healthy changes.

MCPO Jesse Dean

VA Clinic Renaming Ceremony



The VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System (VASNHS) in concert with the Laughlin Veterans community held a ceremony Feb. 10 recognizing the designation of the Laughlin Rural Outreach Clinic as the Master Chief Petty Officer Jesse Dean VA Clinic.

A decorated Vietnam Veteran, Master Chief Dean had a highly successful naval career – serving more than 27 years aboard numerous ships and overseas assignments. After retiring from the Navy in 1992, he settled in Laughlin, where he was a prominent member of the local Veterans community, volunteering daily to assist Veterans in need and helping out with many projects. Master Chief Dean passed away June 1, 2014 at the age of 66.

In November 2015, former Nevada U.S. Congressman Joe Heck introduced House

Resolution 3969 to designate the name of the clinic. The resolution passed the House on May 23, 2016, passed the Senate September 8, 2016, and was signed into public law by President Barack Obama on September 23, 2016. “While I did not have the privilege of knowing Master Chief Jesse Dean, it is clear from speaking with community members and Veterans in Laughlin that naming the VA health clinic in his honor is a fitting tribute,” Congressman Heck said during the ceremony.

“On behalf of our family thank you... You will never know how much this means to us,” said Jesse Dean Jr. who traveled from Texas to attend the ceremony. “While my father would have never asked for anything like this, he would truly be humbled by this recognition.”

The Master Chief Petty Officer Jesse Dean VA Clinic opened in February 2015 to provide services in Laughlin and the surrounding communities. Today, the clinic serves more than 1,300 Veterans.

“We have come a long ways and are dedicated to serving the Veterans of this community with services such as Primary Care, Telehealth care from the VA Medical Center for mental health, dermatology and more,” said Dr. Maia Carter, Chief of VA Primary Care. “We look forward to serving Laughlin and the surrounding communities Veterans from this facility for many years to come.”

BE INVOLVED WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE



What does *“Be Involved With Your Health Care”* mean?

There a few things to consider when being involved in your health care: First, plan ahead for your provider visit to include: looking at medication lists, prepared health questions and gather health related issues for the health team. Second, communicate beliefs, stress or other health concerns, and discuss medications/supplements or other over-the-counter medications you are using. Third, participate in decisions in your health care plan and treatments suggested by the provider. Ask about results and plans you and the provider can do to improve health outcomes.

“ Las Vegas Veterans Stand Down 2017”



The VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System joined the local community for the 14th annual Las Vegas Veterans Stand Down March 15. Organized by U.S. Vets Las Vegas in partnership with several community agencies and sponsors, the event provided services to more than 730 Veterans in need, including housing, employment, medical, counseling and numerous other resources.

The VA Homeless Program is currently located at the Northeast Primary Care Clinic where Primary Care and Community Resources & Referral Center services are provided. For more info call: **(702) 791-9050**.

HEALING YOUR HEART

Cardiac rehabilitation provides Veterans with monitored exercise and education to help cope with and address harmful risk factors.

- › Obesity, blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol, smoking)
- › Known cardiovascular disease (heart attacks, heart failure, peripheral vascular disease, cardiac chest pain, (angina)
- › Stenting or coronary artery bypass grafting, heart valve surgery, and heart transplantation.



Matters of The Heart

Take good care of our heart, many VA events that happen throughout the year remind us that our hearts should be cared for and how your VA providers can answer any questions you may have.

Make a date with your provider to discuss matters of the heart, including improving your diet, exercise, and decreasing stress. Discuss how your personal goals are related, so you can create a whole-health approach to wellness. As with any date, being prepared will greatly affect what you get out of it. Communicate numbers, health changes, family history, and other key factors to improve the outcome. Learn more about how risk factors contribute to heart disease being the number one cause of death in the U.S., including women!

Making small changes to your lifestyle can reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease. Fill half of your plate with green leafy and other colored variety of vegetables. Get at least 30 minutes of moderate activity each day. Find ways to reduce stress through hobbies and healthy activities with friends, family, and the community. Regularly communicate with your providers about health changes and develop a plan that works best for you. What should you do if there is a problem with your heart? If there is a blockage, a provider may suggest cardiac catheterization to remove it from the heart vessels. Cardiac rehabilitation may be helpful after this procedure to improve heart functions. This program will provide information on improving your diet, exercise routines, and other healthy lifestyle changes to improve the overall heart health. "Simple

actions can go a long way to improve heart health," said Victoria Ivanova, VA Primary Care Nurse and long-time cardiac care nurse.

The goal of cardiac rehab is a longer and more active life with lower risks of heart instability and better health care management. A multidisciplinary team consisting of a cardiologist, nurse practitioner, kinesiologist, nutritionist, psychologist, and pharmacist will help you develop a plan. Each group session consists of physical exercise followed by classroom education for a total of two hours. At each session you will learn how to safely exercise using state-of-the-art exercise equipment. After completing cardiac rehab, Veterans will have a better understanding of their own exercise capabilities and how to identify and reduce cardiac risk factors. They will also have increased confidence and knowledge on how to be physically active and to maintain a better quality of life. To receive Cardiac Rehab services through VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System, a consult is needed from either your primary care provider or cardiologist.

Recently the VASNHS treated a Veteran whose lifestyle choices contributed to a decline in his heart health. With a 90% blockage in his heart, he was in trouble. VASNHS Cardiologists Dr. Tillman Cyrus and Dr. Farzad Majidi were able to get the



Veterans heart repaired through Cardiac Catheterization and stent placement. To achieve long-term success and improvement a team of professionals including primary care, nutrition, MOVE program, and cardiac rehabilitation came together to help this Veteran. "He had a variety of health conditions that were greatly affecting his heart health," said Dr. Ursula Ferguson, VA MOVE Physician Champion.

The Veteran's condition greatly improved with removing the heart blockage and making small lifestyle adjustments. His diabetes and liver functions greatly improved and he is now starting to enjoy activities again. The VA MOVE! Weight Management Program for Veterans assisted the Veteran with a variety of exercises to include in his daily routine to promote weight loss and improving his overall wellness.

A HEALTHY HEART FOR A BETTER LIFE



For more information about preventative health and healthy heart care, visit
WWW.WOMENSHEALTH.VA.GOV



Stressing Your Heart? VA Can Help Reduce the Stress

Stress can lead to several health issues. Several health issues can lead to damaging your heart such as higher cortisol levels and higher blood pressure. High cortisol levels in the body leads to increased storage of fats. Over long periods, this higher storage of fat leads to liver disease, heart damage, chronic inflammation and Type 2 Diabetes.

VA has created some programs that assist Veterans with reducing stress. These can include mindful meditation with guided imagery, relaxing therapies, Tai Chi/Chi Gung, stress management groups and more.

Stress may also trigger fight-or-flight mode, and slowing the whole body's healing process. Stress slows down the healing process to include internal heart vessels and valves. Auto immune response causes the heart to heal more slowly. Key factors to help reduce stress is to take a deep breath, enjoy social settings, laugh and enjoy the moment, reduce worry, focus on better nutrition, get plenty of sleep, and exercise with moderate activity 30 minutes per day. Examples of new programs at the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System



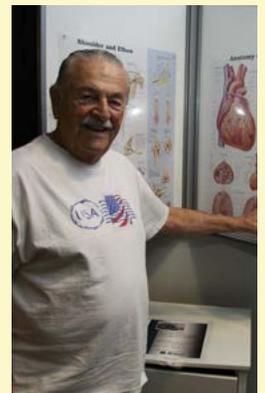
Tai Chi Class/Chi Gung Exercise

include Yoga and Mindfulness Group classes to reduce stress. "Yoga can reduce stress levels by lowering cortisol (the stress hormone). When you take deep yoga breaths, you are lowering cortisol and adrenaline levels, and increasing your oxygen flow to the brain. Yoga postures, called inversions (putting feet up against the wall, for example), is a great position to help with insomnia, lowering heart rate, and anxiety," said Dr. Nicole Anders, Psychiatrist at the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System Behavioral Health Clinic at the North Las Vegas VA Medical Center.

PCI CARDIAC CATHETERIZATION

Korean War Veteran Receives First
Cardiac Catheterization Advanced
Heart Procedure at VASNHS

Leonard Katz, a Korean War Veteran from New York, was proud to be the first patient at the Cardiac Cath Lab for PCI Cardiac Catheterization. Dr. Farzad Majidi performed angioplasty and stenting on his heart to repair the lower chamber area at the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System Medical Center. Mr. Katz suffered from congestive heart failure and needed advanced cardiac catheterization procedures to rebuild and expand damaged or narrowed arteries in his heart. Dr. Majidi performed the PCI procedure while Mr. Katz was awake.



The whole experience was surreal for Mr.

Katz. Once the first procedure at VAMC was completed and Dr. Majidi pronounced it was perfect, VA staff applauded. "I felt like I was in NASA", said Mr. Katz. The cardiac catheterization was successful. When Mr. Katz needed the VA the most, the VA Cardiac Cath Team was there to assist Mr. Katz with improving his heart through advanced care procedures. "You have to be an active participant with your health care. My VA care has been super." said Mr. Katz. He has battled through colon cancer, hip replacements and a recent shoulder surgery through the VA. He used the VASNHS Physical Therapy Clinic to strengthen his shoulder after surgery. He continues to use the valuable tools he learned in Physical Therapy four times per week to stay healthy.

Getting a MOVE! on...

Veterans stick to the plan, improve health with VA weight loss program



VA pioneered a nationwide weight loss program called MOVE!, a Weight Management Program for Veterans. MOVE! is the largest and most comprehensive weight management program associated with a medical care system in the U.S. VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System MOVE! Program has been active since 2007. Currently there are more than 4,000 active participants at any given time (~700 visits/month). It sounds like an exercise program, but is actually a nutrition-based weight management program, focused on group education, and long-term educational support groups. The main goal of MOVE! is to create awareness, screen the Veterans annually, offer easy access, offer various treatment options, and to make frequent contact for two years. The medical costs for people who are obese were \$1,429 higher than those of normal weight.

According to The Journal of Medicine, more than one-third (34.9% or 78.6 million) of U.S. adults are obese; 77% of 60,000 Veterans surveyed are considered overweight or obese according to a VA study. Obesity-related conditions include heart disease, stroke, Type 2 Diabetes and certain types of cancer, some of the leading causes of preventable death. There are some simple ways to put more activities in your daily routine. Do something you love that involves moderate activity. These may include dancing, yoga, hiking, swimming and biking to name a few. Try to do these moderate exercise activities with at least 200 minutes (change to a number more understandable?) per week. Do something that interests you and make it part of your routine. There is no other health risk that is so preventable!

There are several levels with the VA MOVE! Weight Management Program for Veterans. MOVE! is designed to teach patients how to maintain a healthy lifestyle by making adjustments in nutrition and exercise routines.

In 330,000 men and women, "...twice as many premature deaths may be attributable to lack of physical activity compared with the number of deaths attributable to obesity," according to the American Journal Clinical Nutrition Publication, January 24, 2015.

"Knowing your body mass index (BMI) can be an important first step in adopting a realistic diet and physical activity plan to help you get to and maintain a healthy weight." says the United States Department of Agriculture, Choose My Plate website. In general try to keep your BMI under 30. Use the USDA BMI Calculator to see where you fall on the scale: [BMI Calculator](#) In addition, lack of physical activity seems to be the greatest contributor to health issues such as hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and other chronic health conditions.

VA providers may ask if Veterans are interested in the MOVE! Weight Management Program if they have any of the following:

- **high cholesterol/low LDL cholesterol**
- **Hemoglobin A1C/high blood sugar**
- **high blood pressure**
- **high fat or triglycerides**
- **BMI greater than 30**

Veterans may also be referred for the Home Telehealth Weight Management Program. They may choose several options to include the MOVE! Weight Management Program for Veterans or Home Telehealth Move! Program as an option to teach Veterans many aspects of proper diet and exercise routines that work. In these classes, Veterans will meet other Veterans and staff who have successfully implemented the program and improved many areas of their personal goals.

There are a few programs and services in the MOVE! Weight Management Program for Veterans. Two classes that Veterans find most beneficial are the Move! Low Carb Lifelong Group and Move! Intensive Group. Veterans who attend these sessions have been able to improve their health and reduce diabetic and other medications. Many of the Veterans interviewed for this article noted that lack of structure, loss of energy and poor health as contributing factors for joining these Move! groups.

"This Move! Intensive Group makes you want to get physical," said a former Afghanistan Marine Veteran who was previously wheelchair bound due to herniated discs in the back. Eating incorrectly using more carb based diets led to increased pain, depression and other PTSD issues. "I joined this program to be there for my two kids. I noticed I did not want to get off the couch. I was an emotional eater." said a former Operation Desert Storm Army Veteran. Eating for comfort and making food their friend as they transitioned became normal for many of these Veterans. Increased blood sugar, blood pressure and other metabolic conditions created a host of health effects that decreased quality of life for these Veterans.

Join Us for the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System Wellness Fair on April 1, 2017. There will be several booths from VA services to inform you on health matters.

MyVA Access

VASNHS Providing Access to Same-Day Primary Care & Mental Health Services

The Department of Veterans Affairs is on a mission to improve access to care for our nation's Veterans. Central to this vision is the commitment to enhanced access and a consistent set of expectations regarding what a Veteran deserves when he or she enters a VA medical facility. These expectations are summarized in the Department's MyVA Access Declaration and include:

- Timely care including Same-Day Services in Primary Care, as needed.
- Timely Mental Health care, including Same-Day Services, as needed.

The VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System is fully committed to this vision and now offers access to Same-Day Services in both Primary Care and Mental Health. "What this means is when Veterans require primary care assistance right away, during regular business hours, they are able to access services the same day or, if after hours, by the next business day from our VA Medical Center, a Primary Care Clinic or the Women's Health Center," said Dr. Maia Carter, Chief of Primary Care. "When you contact us, we will either address your need that day or schedule appropriate follow-up care depending on the need and urgency."

Doctor Carter explained that each Veteran's Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) will determine the best person to address a particular need, and options for how that care might be provided. "A Veteran's need may be addressed face-to-face with a member of his or her PACT, by telephone, secure message via MyHealthVet, via telehealth technology, by scheduling a future appointment, or by other means," she said.

Providing Same-Day Services in Primary Care is an additional tool VA is implementing to improve access and address Veterans immediate needs; however, it is important to note that this initiative is not the equivalent of a walk-in clinic and does not replace the current process of scheduling primary care appointments for routine matters. Additionally, access to Same-Day Services doesn't replace emergency care and Veterans should always call 911 or report to the emergency room closest to where they are located during a medical emergency.

For Mental Health, if a Veteran is in crisis or has another need for care right away, he or she can get immediate attention from a health care professional at the VA Medical Center Behavioral Health Clinic, a Primary Care Clinic or Women's Health Clinic during business hours, or the VA Medical Center Emergency Department after hours. Additionally, any Veteran new to Mental Health with a non-urgent need will receive an initial screening evaluation by the next calendar day. "We are committed to providing timely, integrated, innovative, and superior quality patient-centered mental health treatment services to our Veterans," said Dr. Alicia Brown, Assistant Chief of Behavioral Health. "As such, Mental Health providers and resources are integrated with primary care and we have the capability to get Veterans care when they need it either in person or via telehealth services."

myVA access
Care When You Need It

If you have a need for primary or mental health care, you can have it addressed the same day during regular business hours.

At the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System, you can be seen by your provider or another appropriate clinical staff member, by phone, through video care, MyHealthVet, or whatever way is most appropriate for the care you need.

Every Day is Veterans Day
SOUTHERN NEVADA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Talk to your PACT or Mental Health Team to learn about all the options you have to access care when you need it.

"The care that I am receiving here is second to none. I am recognized as a person, not a number. MyHealthVet allows me to communicate with my doctors and get quick responses for my health concerns."

— U.S. Army Veteran J.C. Arens
UH-1H Crew Chief & Door Gunner
Cam Tho Delta, Vietnam (1970-1971)

To access Same-Day Services or assistance in Primary Care or Mental Health, Veterans can call the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System Call Center at 702-791-9024, Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., excluding Federal holidays. The Call Center staff will connect Veterans with the appropriate clinical staff for their needs and notify the Veteran's PACT that he or she has called. Additionally, to expedite addressing patients needs, Veterans are encouraged to enroll in MyHealthVet at www.myhealth.va.gov/ and establish a premium account so they can maintain direct contact with their PACT via secure messaging.

Upcoming Events April-June 2017 (Go to www.lasvegas.va.gov for current dates & times)

April – Sexual Assault Awareness Month

1 April - Veterans Quarterly Town Hall (Nutrition & Wellness)

26 April - VA Volunteer Awards Luncheon

May - National Mental Health Month

6-12 May - National Nurses Week

14-20 May - National Women's Health Week

17 May - 2017 VA2K Run/Walk & Health Fair

20 May - LVMS Military & Veterans Appreciation Night

29 May - Memorial Day

June - LGBT Pride Month

June - National PTSD Awareness Month

12-18 June - Men's Health Week

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Changing Behavior for Better Health

The VASNHS “**To The Point Newsletter**” was designed to give Veterans, Families and Stakeholders information on the programs, services and information to better inform them of whole-health approaches to wellness.

Together with a Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT), each Veteran works together with health care professionals to plan for whole-person care and life-long health and wellness. The Veteran is the main member at the center of the health team so he or she can make informed decisions about their health plan with provider, nursing, nutrition, mental health, and services in the community.

Special Events

Health & Wellness Fair and Quarterly Town Hall



VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System in partnership with the Southern Nevada Veterans Community Engagement Board will co-host a Health and Wellness Fair, which will include a Quarterly Veterans Town Hall, at the North Las Vegas VA Medical Center located at 6900 N. Pecos Road. The Health & Wellness-themed event will include speakers, information booths along with other displays and information for Veterans, their families and caregivers.

The Veterans Town Hall will be from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the Medical Center Auditorium and will include updates from local VA and Nevada Department of Veteran Services leadership on improvements and advancements in the delivery of health care, benefits and services in Southern Nevada. The town hall will also include a moderated Q&A session where panelists will be presented with pre-submitted questions from Veterans.

VA PARTICIPANTS (as of 3/17): Benefits, Healthcare Enrollment & Eligibility, Patient Advocates, Choice/Non-VA Care, MyHealthVet, Primary Care, Mental Health, Women’s Health, Vets Centers, Human Resources, Transition and Care Management, LGBT Veterans Care and Special Emphasis Program, Pharmacy, Social Work (Homeless Program), Veterans Transportation Service, Visually Impaired/Blind Rehabilitation Program, Health Promotion & Disease Prevention, Recreation Therapy, Nutrition, Voluntary Services, and Privacy/Freedom of Information Act Officer.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS (as of 3/17): Nevada Department of Veteran Services, Social Security Administration, Veterans Transition Resource Center/Life After Active Duty, Women Veterans of Nevada, American Red Cross, VFW Department of Nevada, Turning Point NV, T.R.Y. Trauma Recovery Yoga, American Legion Post #76, Homewatch CareGivers, Palm Mortuary & Cemetery, Nevada Orthotics & Prosthetics, CapTel Captioned Telephones, Montevista Behavioral Hospital, Alzheimer’s Association, Nevada 2-1-1/Financial Guidance Center, CompassionCare Hospice, CareMore Health Plan, Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health, Office of Congresswoman Dina Titus, and Forgotten Not Gone.

(Note: Listing of participating non-government organizations is for informational purposes only and does not infer or imply endorsement by the Department of Veterans Affairs)

FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION IN THE VA SOUTHERN NEVADA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING WEB LINKS:

VASNHS Website
Free Email Alerts



Scan Here to Sign-up!



VASNHS YouTube



Scan Here for videos!