



CAVHCS Stakeholders discuss Performance Measures

One of the most essential tools a health care provider has at his or her disposal is a strong communication skill set. It's this simple truth that makes the Quarterly Stakeholders Meetings like the one held Friday, February 26 held by Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) so important, because each and every meeting is held to foster the lines of communication.

This quarter's meeting focused on Performance Measures, which on face value might seem to be a provider-centric topic. However, following network and CAVHCS updates from Dr. Biro and CAVHCS Associate Director, Ms. Anita Willard, respectively – CAVHCS Chief of Staff Cliff Robinson explained to those in attendance how and why performance measures affects them personally.

By definition Performance Measurement is the process whereby an organization establishes the parameters within which programs are reaching the desired results. This process of measuring performance often

requires the use of statistical evidence to determine progress toward specifically defined organizational objectives.

With the implementation of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), public sector agencies like



Primary Care Associate Chief of Staff Dr. Ward Newcomb (r) talks with a small group of Veterans, family members and Veteran Service Officers about diabetes during the recent Quarterly Stakeholder Meeting held in the Montgomery VA Medical Center's Multipurpose room. (Image by Robin Johnson)

the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) are increasingly being held accountable for achieving outcomes. GPRA focuses on a results-oriented approach, requiring Federal agencies to develop performance measures that inform and guide organizational decisions and communicate to a broad constituency about their success. As a result of GPRA, all Federal agencies are obligated to provide information to Congress on the effectiveness of their programs.

The VHA is recognized as a leader in using high standards and technology to improve the quality of health care. Over the past seven years, the Institute of Medicine has lauded VA's use of performance measures to improve quality as one of the best in the Nation. It particularly praised VA's

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Advertising Post-9/11 GI Bill Benefits directly to Student Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced a two-month, nationwide advertising campaign to assist student Veterans and servicemembers applying for the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

"VA, student Veterans and our schools have made significant progress in implementing the GI Bill this spring, but we still have more to do," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We won't rest until all student Veterans have received the education benefit they earned in defense of our Nation."

Since inception of this historic new program, VA has issued nearly \$1.9 billion in Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit payments and opened the door to higher education to 209,490 people.

As of Feb. 12, VA has received spring semester Post-9/11 GI Bill enrollments from approximately 180,000 student Veterans and already paid nearly 90 percent of students. All Post-9/11 GI Bill participants whose spring enrollments were received by Jan. 18 have been paid.

"This comprehensive, nationwide advertising campaign will help us reach those student Veterans, servicemembers and educational administrators who need help in understanding the GI Bill and their role in the benefits process," said Keith Wilson, director of VA's educational service.

Social media and online advertising will be extensively used to reach the younger generation of student Veterans. VA will place banner ads on social media sites such as Facebook, Google, MySpace, Yahoo, and other outlets.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill, passed by Congress last year, is the most extensive educational assistance program authorized since the original GI Bill was signed into law in 1944.

Information about the Post-9/11 GI Bill, as well as VA's other educational benefit programs, is available at VA's Web site, www.gibill.va.gov, or by calling 1-888-GIBILL-1 (or 1-888-442-4551).



Staff from Montgomery's Regional Veterans Benefits Office, issued handwritten checks last October to ensure Post-9/11 GI Bill support.

(Image by Robin Johnson)

CAVHCS All-Stars

To the Director: This is the most efficient hospital I have visited, especially Primary Care. For always putting the Veteran first, The Red Team in Primary Care is fabulous. -- Signed, George F., Dothan, AL

Please tell Dr. Nelson, M.D. Neurology, that we really appreciated her "in-depth" explanations of the difference between Parkinson's and other movement disorder related tremors. Thanks appreciating the notes we brought in and helping us to understand the differences in functional and clinical exams. -- Respectfully signed, Mr. and Mrs. William B., Ft. Rucker, AL

I would like to take this time to commend you on assembling such a fine staff here at the West CAVHCS Campus. Although I want to especially single out Ms. Mary Pinkard and Ms. Nikki Stoudemire as the most outstanding of the entire staff. They are both OUTSTANDING! Please tell them to keep up the good work! Also I would like to commend my intake nurse, because I could only remember how bad I felt but the sincere desire of Mrs. Addie Cooper to make things pleasant for me I will forever be grateful and will remember my visit to CAVHCS West. -- Sincerely, Lorenzo A., Stone Mountain, GA

My name is Kenneth W. P., and I have had the most enjoyable and professional service and quality of health care that I have ever received and would come back here for the same care or higher. Thank you so much and God bless you and the terrific "same day Surgery" staff on Ward 2A at CAVHCS. -- Signed, Kenneth W. P., Opelika, AL

I just wanted to comment on the excellent service that I received from the Occupational Therapy Department. I was met with a very friendly and courteous staff (even the Volunteers were notable). Thank you for providing us Veterans with such kindness and consideration in doing a fantastic job. -- With much appreciation, Larry Joe M., Newton, AL

Team CAVHCS joins Scale Back Alabama

When you live in the second heaviest state in the U.S., which also ranks fifth in death rates caused by heart disease, seventh for stroke, and tenth in diabetes – it's probably easier to just go with the crowd, but for a team of CAVHCS employees who join this year's Scale Back Alabama campaign – they've decided join more than 40,000 people who last year lost almost 200,000 pounds.

"Historically I start some kind of diet as a New Year's resolution almost every year," said Susan Shonk, Nurse Manager, Acute Care, "but this year was a little different since I was finally able to motivate my husband to go on a diet with me at the start of the year. We usually do good dieting together for a couple weeks, but then he usually sabotages me with Mexican food on Friday afternoons or a big lunch after church on Sunday. So I thought if I joined this 'Scale Back' program it would keep me focused for at least 10 more weeks, and it has. I've lost 15 pounds since January 1st and I am more motivated than usual, because I have to go back and weigh in April."

Scale Back Alabama is a public awareness campaign hosted by Alabama's hospitals and the Alabama Department of Public Health. The campaign is broken into two levels – individual and team. For every individual who completes the 10-week contest and loses at least 10 pounds, his/her name will be placed in a drawing for one of 50 state-wide prizes of \$100 each.

The members of "Team CAVHCS" for this year's Scale Back Alabama campaign are: Patricia E. Adams from Facilities, Susan Shonk, Rarilyn Young-Myers from Patient Care Services and Mary Vinson both from Acute Care & Specialty Nursing.

For the team that maintains all of its original team members throughout the contest with each team member losing at least 10 pounds, the team name will be placed in a drawing for one of three grand prizes. The First Team drawn will win \$250 each, The Second Team drawn, \$500 per team member, and the Third Team drawn will win \$1,000 per team member.

Team CAVHCS is already off to a great start. The pounds are coming off, and while their respective approaches may be different, their mutual support is a constant. "I'm walking and using my treadmill at home," said Adams. "And I'm on a low carbohydrate diet and walking 2-3

miles, 3-4 times a week on my treadmill at home," said Shonk. "The hardest thing to deal with is not being able to eat bread, pasta, rice or sweets. But, to date I have lost 12 pounds since the first of the year." Prize winners will be announced on April 28 in Montgomery. GO Team CAVHCS!



The members of 'Team CAVHCS' for this year's Scale Back Alabama campaign are: Patricia E. Adams from Facilities, Susan Shonk (left/right), Rarilyn Young-Myers from Patient Care Services and Mary Vinson both from Acute Care & Specialty Nursing

The CAVHCS Salute



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Anita F. Willard, MPH
Carolyn Caver-Gordon
Cliff Robinson, MD
Al Bloom

Employees of the Month

Ms. Brenda Williams *HRMS, Tuskegee Campus*

An old Japanese Proverb states “One kind word can warm three winter months.” That is the kind of feeling you receive from Brenda Williams, Secretary, Human Resources Management Services (HRMS).



Mrs. Williams is a consummate professional and provides service second to none. She greets employees, applicants and other visitors with a smile and a willingness to provide optimal service. She maintains accurate records, schedules numerous meetings, has established a filing system for her office, answers the telephone, assists bilingual applicants and attends several meetings monthly. And, that’s a very short list of her duties and responsibilities.

Mrs. Williams’ commitment to the Human Resources Management Services is also evident in her ability to multi-task. Often she is observed completing several tasks at the same time while continuing to maintain her friendly demeanor. While she has only been an employee with CAVHCS since August 2009, Mrs. Williams’ expertise was acknowledged from the beginning due to her ability to learn quickly and complete assigned tasks within a timely manner. Mrs. Williams continues to maintain her high standards and is a valuable member to the HRMS team.

Ms. Karron Armstrong, LPN *Primary Care, Montgomery Campus*



The recipient of employee of the Month for the Montgomery Campus is Ms. Karron Armstrong, LPN, who works in the Primary Care outpatient clinics.

On February 9, 2010 she was leaving work after her tour of duty and witnessed a car accident at the foot of the hill on VA property. She got out of her car to help. She banged on the window of the car to help arouse the person and directed the Fire Department to break the window.

Mrs. Armstrong stayed with the person, who happened to be an employee, and gave information to the EMTs. She then returned to the hospital to inform other staff of the accident. The employee’s family member was called and informed of the situation and was told which hospital the employee was transported for treatment.

This exemplifies the outstanding service and care of one employee to help another. Mrs. Armstrong is that kind of person and her work here and away from CAVHCS shows her drive to be the best at her job.



Make sure you get two! All VA employees whose payroll records migrated to DFAS in 2009 will receive two W-2s. You will get one W-2 from the VA for payroll paid by VA and the second one from DFAS for the portion of payroll paid by DFAS.

Web Site offers Single Access Point for Wounded Warriors

The federal departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor and Defense recently unveiled an improved Web site for wounded warriors.

“VA is committed to tapping into the full powers of the Internet to provide accurate, timely, easy to find and easy to understand information that improves the lives of Veterans, service members, their families and all who care for them,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

The National Resource Directory is a comprehensive, free, online tool for wounded, ill and injured service members, Veterans and their families. Visitors to the site can find an extensive range of information about Veterans’ benefits, including disability and pension benefits, VA health care and educational opportunities. The site also provides information for those who care for Veterans, such as access to emotional, financial and community assistance.

The Web site has been enhanced to provide a single point of access to a wealth of information from more than 10,000 sites by federal, state and local governments and organizations offering services for wounded warriors.

“This online directory is an invaluable resource for those involved in helping service members and Veterans,” Shinseki said. “Reliable information about government and private-sector programs can be a priceless tool.”

The new design will help visitors find needed resources easily. Other enhancements include a fast,

accurate search engine; a “bookmark and share” capability that allows users to share valuable resources on Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites; and a news feature with updates on relevant information and events. Resources are added daily. Visit the site at www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov.

VA RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS FOR 2010 NATIONAL VETERANS SUMMER SPORTS CLINIC

Setting your course for the future is the theme for the 3rd National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic to be held in beautiful San Diego from September 18 – 25, 2010.

We’re seeking recently injured Veterans to participate in this rehabilitative event. Help us get the word out to potential Veterans and volunteers.

Applications for Veteran participants and volunteers will be available upon request starting March 1.

For more information about the Summer Sports Clinic, please see the Web site at www1.va.gov/opa/speceven/ssc/Default.asp, email Tristan.heaton2@va.gov or call 858-642-6426.





CAVHCS Photo Gallery

Black History Month Observances



CAVHCS EEO presented Black History Month observances in the Montgomery Multipurpose Room and Tuskegee Staff Training Room. This year's theme was 'The History of Black Economic Empowerment.'

Keynote speaker, Vice-President for Minority Business Development and Leadership Programs, for the Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce, Harold L. Boone, Sr. was joined by the 'Women of Gee's Bend.'

Task Force Continues work on Gulf War Illness Report

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced that the department's Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses Task Force has nearly completed a comprehensive report that will redefine how VA addresses the pain and suffering of ill Veterans who deployed during the Gulf War in 1990 and 1991.

"At VA, we advocate for Veterans – it is our overarching philosophy and, in time, it will become our culture," Secretary Shinseki said. "Every day we must challenge our assumptions to serve our Nation's Veterans."

The mission of VA's Gulf War Task Force is to identify gaps in services as well as opportunities to better serve Veterans of the Gulf War. Of the almost 700,000 service members who deployed to Operation Desert Shield in 1990 and Operation Desert Storm in 1991, there have been 300,000 Gulf War Veterans with claims decisions, over 85 percent were granted service connection for at least one condition, and over 14 percent were not granted service connection for any condition.

"We must learn from the past and take the opportunity to anticipate the future needs of our Veterans," Shinseki said. "This new approach is the first step in a still unfolding comprehensive plan of how VA will treat and compensate Veterans of the Gulf War era."

The chairman of the Gulf War Task Force is John R. Gingrich, Chief of Staff at Veterans Affairs and retired Army officer who served during the Gulf War. "Reaching out to Gulf War Veterans is not only essential to our transformation of VA, for many of us it is also personal," Mr. Gingrich said. "Having commanded troops in Gulf War, and then witness some of them fall to mysterious illnesses has been very difficult to watch. With this Task Force, I am hopeful we can provide these men and women a better quality of life."

VA's Gulf War Task Force recommendations build on the findings from the 2008 VA Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Illnesses. The Task Force's recommendations include:

- * Improve data sharing with Department of Defense to notify Veterans of potential exposures, monitor their long-term health and inform them about decisions regarding additional follow up.
- * Improve the delivery of benefits to Veterans with Gulf War-related disabilities by
 - a. Reviewing, and if necessary, updating regulations affecting Gulf War Veterans.
 - b. Expanding training for VBA examiners on how to administer disability claims with multiple known toxin exposure incidents.
- * Improve VA healthcare for Veterans through a new model of interdisciplinary health education and training.
- * Increase number of long term, Veteran-focused studies of Veterans to enhance the quality of care VA provides.
- * Transition from reactive to proactive medical surveillance to help better manage Veterans' potential hazardous exposures.
- * Find new treatments for Gulf War Veterans through new research.
- * Enhance outreach to provide information and guidance to Veterans about benefits and services available to them for injuries/illnesses associated with Gulf War service.

VA Swears in New Under Secretary of Health

Dr. Robert A. Petzel has taken the oath of office as the Under Secretary for Health within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), stepping up to lead the nation's largest integrated health care system.

"Dr. Petzel brings to this position a strong leadership background in caring for Veterans as a longtime health system manager in VA," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "His commitment to outstanding medical quality and access for Veterans will be critical to leading VA in its 21st century transformation."

Petzel had been Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health since May 2009. Previously, he directed one of VA's 21 geographic health care networks covering eight medical centers and 42 community based outpatient clinics serving Veterans in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, western Illinois and western Wisconsin.

During his decades of service to Veterans in VA, he has served on numerous advisory committees that guided development of new and improved health care programs. Board certified in internal medicine, Petzel also has served previously as chief of staff for the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

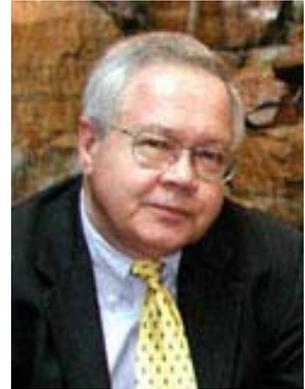
He graduated from Northwestern University Medical School in 1969 and has served on the faculty of the University of Minnesota Medical School.

More than 8 million Veterans are enrolled in VA's health care system, which is growing in the wake of its eligibility expansion. This year, VA expects to treat nearly 6 million patients during 78 million outpatient visits and 906,000 inpatient admissions.

The Veterans Health Administration, the 262,000-employee component of VA that Petzel now heads, is comprised of 153 hospitals nationwide, more than 800 geographically separate outpatient clinics or mobile clinics, and 232 readjustment counseling Vet Centers.

VA offers a comprehensive spectrum of care for Veterans from preventive services and primary care to high-tech subspecialty medicine and hospice programs. Backed by a world-class electronic health records system, care is delivered in settings as diverse as telehealth monitoring of vital signs from a rural Veteran's home to a network of 134 VA community living centers for nursing home care for Veterans in their later years.

Enhanced programs for today's generation of combat Veterans include "seamless transition" initiatives to ensure continuity of care from the battlefield to hometown, special screenings for traumatic brain injury, and an enhanced array of mental health services to meet Veterans' needs as they return to civilian life as well as special attention to the needs of women and rural Veterans.



'Performance Measures'

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use of performance measures, reports, self-assessment tools, site visits, and best practices in the surgical area where their impact reduced the number of deaths within 30 days after surgery by 27 percent over nine years.

VA's electronic medical record system and bar coding program are key components in improving health care quality and patient safety and have been recognized for advancing the profession as a whole in the United States. VA's programs have been adopted in other countries, such as Australia, Japan, and Denmark. VA's research program continues to address health care problems that impact veterans and the general population.

However, on Friday, February 26 CAVHCS' use of Performance Measures was explained to those in attendance in the Montgomery VA Medical Center's Multipurpose Room. During that explanation Dr. Robinson said, "We want to learn from you how we can improve and want to provide resources for you to enhance your understanding of your care and clinical services. You have an active role as well, such as taking your medications as needed, getting necessary procedures and shots."

To that end, those in attendance broke into focus groups and discussed Diabetes, Behavioral Health and Hypertension. Leading those conversations were Primary Care Associate Chief of Staff Dr. Ward Newcomb, Mental Health

Associate Chief of Staff Dr. Brad Soule and Acute Care Associate Chief of Staff Dr. Gilmer Rodriguez respectively.

Following the separate focus groups all in attendance gathered to discuss the focus group findings in a single group. During the Stakeholder Meeting additional educational opportunities were offered by services ranging from MyHealthVet and Suicide Awareness to Geriatric Care and even Flu Shots.

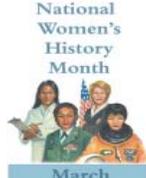
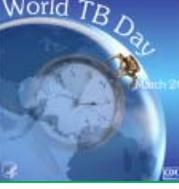


Following an explanation of how and why Performance Measures are important to ensuring quality care by CAVHCS Chief of Staff, Dr. Cliff Robinson (inset), Acute Care Associate Chief of Staff Dr. Gilmer Rodriguez (above, r) discussed hypertension with those in attendance at the latest CAVHCS Quarterly Stakeholders meeting. (Images by Robin Johnson)



Unfortunately if you had an appointment February 12, you probably had to reschedule, because of the winter storm that covered parts of Central Alabama with as many as 7 inches of snow - leaving road conditions too hazardous to travel.

March

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month www.msfocus.org	2	3	4	 RED CROSS MONTH	6
7	8  International Women's Day	10  Patient Safety Awareness Week	11  World Kidney Day 11 March 2010	12	13	 National Women's History Month March
14 Daylight Saving Time Begins 	15 VA Cabinet Status (1989) 	16 Freedom of Information Day 	17  Happy Spring Day	18 International Brain Awareness Week National Pulmonary Rehabilitation Week National Poison Prevention Week	19	 Spring Starts
21  Tuskegee Airmen Activated (1941)	22  Diabetes Alert Day	23  World TB Day	24	25  OEF/OIF Veterans WE CARE ABOUT YOU	26  MARCH National Brain Injury Awareness Month	27
 22nd National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic www.wintersportsclinic.va.gov Snowmass Village, Colorado		31 Colorectal Cancer Education and Awareness Month www.preventcancer.org		Women's History Month http://www.nwhm.org American Red Cross Month http://www.redcross.org National Kidney Month http://www.kidney.org/ Ethics Awareness Month http://www.ethicscheck.com Brain Injury Awareness Month http://www.biausa.org		

The CAVHCS Community Calendar is not intended to be an all-inclusive, official calendar. It is intended rather to provide a medium for CAVHCS Salute to share upcoming events.

If you would like to add a CAVHCS event please email details directly to alan.bloom@va.gov. Submissions are not guaranteed to be published. Editorial considerations will be made for propriety, promptness and print space.