

VETERANS' ADVANTAGE

SPRING 2008

THE WELLNESS MAGAZINE
FOR NEW YORK / NEW JERSEY VETERANS



Memorial Day





From the Network Director:

A Memorial Day tribute

Dear Veteran,

Memorial Day, the last Monday in May, is when we honor America's fallen warriors. This holiday began almost spontaneously in the years after the Civil War, as citizens of a reunited America responded to the call to remember and honor those who died in our nation's bloodiest war.

On Memorial Day we reflect on the 1.2 million U.S. military men and women who, since the Revolutionary War, have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. We also recognize the 41 million men and women who served in the military during wartime and the 25 million veterans who are alive today—the majority of whom served during periods of war.

As VA employees, we work every day to honor those who have fallen by serving our living veterans. We honor veterans who seek health care at our medical centers and community clinics with professional and compassionate health care. We owe our best to America's best—and we deliver our best each and every day.

On this Memorial Day, America will remember our fallen countrymen and women. Yet for those of us at VA, this day is also about patriotic service to the living. We honor those who gave their lives for this country by proudly serving those who served us.

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VA Network Director

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<http://www.va.gov/visns/visn03>



Get your prescriptions online

You asked for it, and you got it! You can now use My Health@Vet—VA's online service for veterans—to refill your prescriptions and view your prescription history online. To take advantage of this service, you must be a registered user of My Health@Vet. As a registered user, you'll also have access to a Personal Health Journal, where you can record and track your health statistics online. To register for these important benefits, visit www.myhealth.va.gov.

We're just a phone call away

Veterans, do you have questions about your health? During weekdays (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), staff at your VA Medical Center or VA Clinic are available to assist. After 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, weekends, or holidays, call the VA Nurses Helpline at 1-800-877-6976 if you have a medical question. Remember to call 911 at any time if you're having a medical emergency.

Lt. Gen. James B. Peake, M.D., is new VA Secretary

Lt. Gen. James B. Peake, M.D., a Vietnam War combat veteran and former U.S. Army Surgeon General, was sworn in by President George W. Bush on Dec. 20, 2007, as the nation's sixth VA Secretary.

Peake spoke of his commitment to easing the transition of the current generation of returning, combat-experienced men and women and "the opportunity to look to the future of this newest generation of combat veterans."

"[W]e have]...the opportunity to look to the future of this newest generation of combat veterans."

Peake, who retired in 2004 as a three-star general, is a board-certified thoracic surgeon. His commands included the U.S. Army Medical Command headquartered at Fort Sam Houston, Texas; Madigan Army Medical Center in Tacoma, Wash.; the 44th Medical Brigade at Fort Bragg, N.C.; and the 18th Medical Command in Seoul, South Korea.

A native of St. Louis and graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Peake earned the



Silver Star, a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart for his service in Vietnam.

More than 5.5 million veterans are expected to receive care this year in VA's 153 hospitals and 900 clinics. VA also provides disability compensation and pensions to 3.5 million veterans and family members and operates 125 national cemeteries. ■

VBA opens new call centers



The Veterans Benefits Administration recently established nine call centers nationwide to handle inquiries usually made to regional offices by veterans and their families. The centers will take incoming calls to the VBA's toll-free number at 1-800-827-1000.

The transition to the national call centers began with the Hartford regional office in January 2007. Earlier this year, 50 percent of the calls to the New York regional office were redirected to the call centers.

The New York office receives an average of 12,000

to 14,000 calls per month. Callers ask a variety of questions, such as whether their checks have been mailed, their claims received or whether they're entitled to burial benefits.

Veterans and their families will continue to have their inquiries resolved by using the toll-free number. If further action is needed, the regional office will be notified.

Veterans may continue to visit the New York VBA Regional Office at 245 W. Houston St., New York, N.Y., Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. ■

Palliative care offers comfort

BY CAROL LUHRS, M.D., AND THERESE CORTEZ, N.P.

The primary goal of a palliative care program is comfort rather than cure for a patient in the advanced stages of incurable disease. Available to patients and their families in VISN 3 acute care hospitals and nursing homes, this type of program empowers everyone involved by giving them the information and skills needed for shared decision-making and active participation in care.

From its initiation in November 2002, the VISN 3 Palliative Care Program has developed a network-wide, standardized, interdisciplinary therapeutic approach that includes a designated Palliative Care Consultation Team (PCCT).

Each team has an advanced practice nurse coordinator, a physician, a social worker and a chaplain. They ensure that choices for end-of-life care made by veterans with a life-limiting illness and their families are respected and that psychosocial and spiri-



tual needs are addressed.

The PCCTs assess and treat pain and other symptoms. They help identify goals of care and select treatments to meet those goals. They also provide practical support, care coordination and bereavement services. Use of the PCCT extends the scope of services available while also supporting the relationships between primary care teams and veterans and their families.

Every effort has been made to establish an end-of-life standard of care throughout our facilities. A PCCT is at each of the acute care

hospitals in Brooklyn, Manhattan, Bronx, Northport and East Orange, and at each of our free-standing nursing homes in St. Albans, Castle Point and Lyons. Nursing homes are on site at Northport and Bronx, so the PCCT serves both facilities. There are dedicated Palliative Care Units at the five nursing homes and an inpatient Palliative Care Unit at the Brooklyn VA Medical Center.

The VISN 3 Palliative Care Program collaborates with the national VA Hospice and Palliative Care Program and the Bronx–New York Harbor Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Center. It also has strong ties to the community through the New York/New Jersey Hospice Veteran Partnership.

In 2006, the program received the prestigious American Hospital Association's Circle of Life citation of honor award. The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the Center to Advance Palliative Care have also recognized the program for providing compassionate supportive care



Reaching out to new veterans

Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) veterans are invited to talk about their transition from military to civilian life in focus groups meeting quarterly at each VA Medical Center.

Participants are encouraged to discuss their experiences involving employment and family readjustment, their care at VA and the coping skills they've developed since returning from combat. Spouses, partners and VA staff are also welcome to attend the sessions.

Evening group sessions are available to accommodate veterans who work or attend school during the day. Other new support groups are



being introduced as well.

Each VA Medical Center also hosts an annual Welcome Home event for returning veterans and their families, which may include a job fair or family picnic. Planned with Veterans Service Organizations, community agencies and businesses, the events are part of an effort to reach out to our newest veterans and their families.

Contact your local VA Medical Center for dates and times for these programs. ■

Get moving with new DVD

VA has released a one-hour, 40-minute exercise DVD featuring a step-by-step workout to help veterans become more physically active and healthier.

Movements are presented at different levels—beginner, intermediate and advanced—to enable individuals to follow the exercises at the level that suits them best. The DVD emphasizes that good nutrition goes hand-in-hand with regular exercise.

Copies of the DVD can be obtained at VA medical facilities from coordinators for *MOVE!* and *HealthierUS Veterans*. ■

Eligibility extended for VA health care



Combat veterans who served after Nov. 11, 1998, now have more time to apply for VA health care benefits. The National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2008 extends the enrollment period as follows:

- Currently enrolled combat veterans will have their enrollment period automatically extended to five years from their most recent discharge date.
- New enrollees discharged from active duty on or after Jan. 28, 2003, are eligible for five years after their discharge date.
- Combat veterans who never enrolled and were discharged from active duty between Nov. 11, 1998, and Jan. 27, 2003, may apply for benefits through Jan. 27, 2011.

Meanwhile, combat veterans who applied for health care coverage after Jan. 16, 2003, but weren't accepted because they missed the post-discharge window of two years, will have their applications automatically reviewed.

As before, eligible combat veterans will not be charged co-payments for medication or treatment of conditions related to their combat service. After their eligibility period ends, enrolled veterans may have co-pays, depending on their income level.

For more information, speak to the Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) program manager, case manager or transition patient advocate available at any VA Medical Center. Online, go to www.va.gov/healtheligibility/. ■

Where YOU CAN FIND US—ANYTIME

Bronx

Medical Center:
130 West Kingsbridge Road
Bronx, NY 10468
(718) 584-9000

Community Clinics:
23 South Broadway
White Plains, NY 10601
(914) 421-1951

124 New Main Street
Yonkers, NY 10701
(914) 375-8055

41-03 Queens Boulevard
Sunnyside, NY 11104
(718) 741-4800

953 Southern Boulevard
Bronx, NY 10459
(718) 741-4900

VA New York Harbor Health Care System

Medical Centers:
Brooklyn Campus
800 Poly Place
Brooklyn, NY 11209
(718) 836-6600

New York Campus
423 East 23rd Street
New York, NY 10010
(212) 686-7500

VA Primary and Extended
Care Center
179th Street & Linden Boulevard
St. Albans, NY 11425
(718) 526-1000

Community Clinics:
40 Flatbush Extension—8th Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201
(718) 439-4300

1150 South Avenue
3rd Floor—Suite 301
Staten Island, NY 10314
(718) 761-2973

55 West 125th Street—11th Floor
New York, NY 10027
(212) 828-5265

VA New Jersey Health Care System

Medical Centers:
East Orange Campus
385 Tremont Avenue
East Orange, NJ 07018-1095
(973) 676-1000

Lyons Campus
151 Knollcroft Road
Lyons, NJ 07939
(908) 647-0180

Community Clinics:
970 Route 70
Brick, NJ 08724
(732) 206-8900

654 East Jersey Street—Suite 2A
Elizabeth, NJ 07206
(908) 994-0120

171 Jersey Street—Building 36
Trenton, NJ 08611-2425
(609) 989-2355

385 Prospect Avenue
Hackensack, NJ 07601
(201) 487-1390

115 Christopher Columbus Drive
Jersey City, NJ 07302
(201) 435-3055

317 George Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
(732) 729-0646

340 West Hanover Avenue
Morristown, NJ 07960
(973) 539-9791
(973) 539-9794

20 Washington Place
Newark, NJ 07102
(973) 645-1441

Patterson Army Health Clinic
Stephenson Avenue—Building 1075
Fort Monmouth, NJ 07703
(732) 532-4500

275 Getty Avenue
Paterson, NJ 07503
(973) 247-1666

VA Hudson Valley Health Care System

Medical Centers:
Montrose Campus
Route 9A/P.O. Box 100
Montrose, NY 10548-0100
(914) 737-4400

Castle Point Campus
Castle Point, NY 12511
(845) 831-2000

Community Clinics:
Jefferson Professional Plaza
60 Jefferson Street
Unit 3
Monticello, NY 12701
(845) 791-4936

150 Pike Street
Port Jervis, NY 12771
(845) 856-5396

20 Squadron Boulevard—
Suite 400
New City, NY 10956
(845) 634-8942

30 Hatfield Lane—
Suite 204
Goshen, NY 10924
(845) 294-6927

488 Freedom Plains Road
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603
(845) 452-5151

1875 Route 6
Warwick Savings Bank—
2nd Floor
Carmel, NY 10512
(845) 228-5291

2881 Church Street
Route 199
Pine Plains, NY 12567
(518) 398-9240

Northport (Long Island)

Medical Center:
79 Middleville Road
Northport, NY 11768
(631) 261-4400

Community Clinics:
4 Phyllis Drive
Patchogue, NY 11772
(631) 758-4419

1425 Old Country Road
Plainview, NY 11803
(516) 694-6008

Westhampton Air Base
(by appointment only)
150 Old Riverhead Road
Westhampton, NY 11978
(631) 898-0599

NY/NJ Veterans Integrated Service
Network 3
130 W. Kingsbridge Road
VISN Office
Bronx, NY 10468

<http://www.va.gov/visns/visn03>

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