

# VIP

# Veterans Information Periodical

Issue 1, August 2008

For Eastern Colorado Health Care System Veterans

**WELCOME** to the first issue of the Eastern Colorado Health Care System's **Veterans Information Periodical or VIP.** The **VIP** will keep the veterans informed about health concerns, classes, and what is going on in the Denver Medical Center, as well as the Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). Information is supplied by staff in addition to veteran input. We hope you enjoy this first issue and look forward to publishing many more issues in the future.

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The content of this newsletter does not necessarily reflect the opinions of, or include support of the Administration Board, Editorial Staff, or Department of Veterans Affairs.

## THE EYEGLASS MAN

Here at the Denver VA Medical Center he is known as the "eyeglass man." But from 1951 to 1954, he was known as Seaman Frank Montijo. Frank enlisted in the Navy at the age of 17 and served aboard destroyers in fire control, calling directions to the target. For his service he earned five battle stars.

Frank's lifelong dream was to be at sea once more on a Navy ship, preferably a destroyer where he'd spent most of his time. And in June, 2006 that dream came true. Frank's eyes light up and his smile beams as he talks of his adventure. "Everything has changed so much," he said. "The ships are so much bigger and they don't rock and roll."

In March, 2004 Frank wrote his Congressman and was told the Navy no longer does special visits. Frank wrote to the Secretary of the Navy and told him of his war time service and his service at the Denver VA Medical Cen-

ter. He didn't hear anything for months until he received a phone call telling him they had a ship for him to tour out of Virginia in three days. Because of an appointment he could not break, Frank turned down the trip, postponing his dream for another year.

In March, 2006 he sent another letter to the Secretary of the Navy along with a copy of his first letter. He received a call with news he could visit a cruiser in May or a destroyer in June. There was no doubt in Frank's mind which it would be.

In June of 2006 Frank was flown by helicopter from Virginia Beach to the USS Nitze DDG 94, a new addition to the Navy fleet.

He was welcomed by the Captain, given a tour of the ship, ate lunch in the officers' mess, "for a change," and presented the Captain and crew with a Korean War memorial flag. Frank also had the opportunity to fly his own memorial flag for the day. His lifelong dream has been replaced by lifelong memories. Congratulations Seaman Frank Montijo!



**If you're in an emotional crisis call 1-800-273-TALK "Press 1 for Veterans"**

[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)



## HEALTH INFORMATION CALL CENTER (HICC)

The Health Information Call Center (HICC) creates a centralized contact point for incoming calls from patients and the community. One phone number, (303) 399-8020 or toll-free (888) 336-8262, will get you pretty much anywhere you need to go within the Denver Medical Center.

As with any new system, getting informed about and comfortable using HICC takes a little time and practice. The Health Administration Service provides information and brochures to patients about the services HICC can provide. When you call (303)399-8020 and select option 2, the prompts will assist you with **canceling or making an appointment, or speak with a pharmacy representative or with a Registered Nurse who can relay messages to the primary care or specialty care provider.** Calls for Primary Care Providers (PCP) and Specialty staff should go to HICC.

For all other needs, please contact the Medical Center switchboard operator, again (303)399-8020, to get the correct extension and/or fax number for the person, service, or department that you are trying to reach at the Denver VA

Medical Center.

If you are trying to send a **fax**, please call for the correct fax number for the office or the Care Provider/area that you are trying to reach.

**Release of Information:** (303) 393-2873 - to speak with medical records staff

**FAX:** (303)393-4631 - to submit **signed** release of information forms.

**Look for updates and hints on how to use the call system with each issue of VIP.**

### VA Announces Online Claims

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will now accept online applications from veterans, survivors and other claimants for disability compensation, pension, education, and vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits without the additional requirement of submitting a signed paper copy of the application. VA will process applications received through its [VONAPP online application website](#) without the claimant's signature. The online application also provides a link to apply for VA health care benefits and much more. For more information about VA benefits, go to [VA's Website](#) or call the toll-free number (800) 827-1000.



### The Folks in Blue by Barbara Lilly

When you visit the Denver VA Medical Center you may have noticed people wearing royal blue smocks or shirts...our VA volunteers. Many of these volunteers are themselves, veterans, who continue to serve their brother and sister vets. Some of them have called their volunteer work at the VA "a life-changing experience."

Our volunteer corps--more than 400 strong-- is always in need of volunteers. Opportunities range from patient escort to administrative work, driving a DAV van, working with our recreation therapists or visiting inpatients, to name a few. Our new Wayfinder program will give volunteers an opportunity to help veterans navigate the hospital. Volunteers are required to make a one-year commitment and serve a minimum of four hours per week.

If you would like to become part of our volunteer team, please call Barbara Lilly, Voluntary Specialist, at ext. 2802.

### New Evening Stop-Smoking Classes



**Every other Wednesday beginning August 13th through October 8th (after October 8th, call for future class dates)**

**One-time class  
5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.  
Room 1B-100  
(may walk-in or return for refresher information)**

**Contact your PCP or the specialty desk, extension 5117, for more information and confirmation of class times.**

### MUSIC AND "BLIPS"

In an effort to make the most of your time, the Denver VA Medical Center has installed music and informational "blips" to listen to when you must be put on hold, waiting for your call to be connected. We apologize for any time you must be put on hold, but perhaps now it will be a more pleasant experience. Messages are in English and Spanish. A BIG **Thank You** to all for your patience.

## Understanding Bar Code Medication Administration (BCMA)



VA Medical Centers use BCMA to administer your medications correctly.

All units of medication leave the VA pharmacy with a bar-coded label that can be scanned. This, along with the barcoded information on the patient ID armband, helps match the right patient to the right medication.

VA uses BCMA because we take patient safety seriously. We want to make sure that all of our patients receive the right medication at the right time.

### Who makes BCMA work?

1. Your provider orders the medications.
2. A pharmacist makes sure you are not allergic to the medication and that it will not have a drug interaction with other medications you are taking.
3. The nurse gives you the medication that has been ordered.

### How will the nurse know which medications to give me?

When you are admitted to the hospital, a bar-coded identification band is placed on your wrist. It includes your name, social security number and date of birth.

Before you receive any

medication, the nurse will scan the bar code on your identification band. This allows the nurse to pull up your current medication orders on the computer.

The nurse then scans the bar code on all medications to be given to you at that point in time and gives you those medications.

### Why is this method so safe?

It is safe because it uses a computer to compare your orders with the drugs to be given. If there is a problem, your nurse is alerted not to give the medication and to call the pharmacy. Your wristband will be scanned every time you are to receive medication.

### How can I help?

Allow the nurse to scan your wristband. Even though the nurse may know you, it is still important to identify you by scanning your wristband.

If you have any questions about your medications or BCMA, please ask your nurse, provider, or pharmacist. Brochures are also available on the inpatient wards.

### How I Took on My Fight Against Cancer

*First, I dove into the Spiritual Realm of our Lord. I thought I was a believer before, but now I had to go deeper into my soul--my inner self. This I am accomplishing through the many different books available to us dealing with subjects on self-help and spiritual guidance.*

*Second, I needed VA Doctors with nurses who demonstrated a positive attitude toward my illness...a team of caring people who had faith in what they were trying to accomplish with my person.*

*Third, the need for good Food Supplements. We don't get all the vitamins or minerals from the food we eat today. Don't buy junk and consult with your Doctors.*

*Fourth, have a good Support System of family friends and others who are really trying to help. Make sure they are positive and do not interject negative thoughts. Stress is what you need less of.*

**This is your team...four areas that will help you improve your attitude and give you what you need to fight, the Fight of Your Life. You must take the first step and keep taking the first step everyday and night. As members of God's creation, He installed into us the drive and courage that keeps the fight going. WE DON'T GIVE UP. We keep on getting up and up and up. Stand tall and be proud of the perfect human being God created.**

Thank you.

**Robert Borrego, Patient**  
(970)867-3741  
*Email: tortuga\_rb@msn.com*



### The Veterans Identification Card Replacement Initiative

In order to reduce veteran vulnerability to identity theft and to demonstrate VA's commitment to securing the confidential personal information of enrolled veterans, all VA medical facilities will initiate aggressive campaigns to replace old versions of the veteran identification card. Prior identification cards display sensitive information (social security number and date of birth) on the front of the card. The new VIC, which was introduced in 2004, removed the sensitive information from the front of the card.

**If you have an old version of the identification card, contact your local VA medical facility to have a new veteran identification card issued to you.**

Go to <http://vaww.vistau.med.va.gov/VistaU/vic/> for more information about the new VIC.

## INFECTION CONTROL CORNER

MRSA is short for Methicillin-resistant *Staph. aureus*. It is a form of the bacteria *Staph. aureus* that has become resistant to the most commonly prescribed antibiotic, Methicillin, used to treat *Staph* infections. MRSA and *Staph* are bacteria that can live on your skin and in your nose without causing an infection.

### ***Difference between infected and colonized***

Colonized is where bacteria is cultured from someone's nose, but there are no signs or symptoms of infection. Signs and symptoms of infection would include: fever, site redness, swelling, drainage.

### ***How do we tell who is colonized?***

Upon admission to the hospital and to the Community Living Center, we will use a cotton swab to gather a sample from your nose. With this swab we will be able to tell if you are colonized. MRSA likes to live in warm moist places and the nose is a great breeding ground for bacteria. Further swabs will be taken every 6 months and on discharge to ensure that you remain clear of MRSA during your stay with us.

### ***How to protect yourself***

Clean your hands often. Soap and water will remove the bacteria from your skin and prevent transmission. Alcohol gel also works to kill the bacteria and prevent transmission.

### ***What is the treatment for MRSA colonization?***

Colonization does not require treatment because there is no infection. Since antibiotics can cause increased antibiotic resistance and cause unwanted side effects such as diarrhea, it is not recommended to use them if there is no active infection.

### ***Hospital care for the MRSA-positive patient***

When you are in the hospital and the bacteria has been isolated from your nose, meaning you are colonized, or if you have an active infection, you will be placed into Contact Precautions. Contact Precautions means that everyone that enters your room must put on gowns and

## **WHAT IS MRSA?**

gloves prior to entering the room. The gown and gloves serve as a barrier to reduce MRSA transfer from colonized and infected patients to the other patients in our care. Contact Precautions also includes hand washing before and after patient contact. Your part in Contact Precautions as a patient involves staying in your room except for medical reasons like getting x-rays, and the possibility that you will be roomed in a single bed room.

### ***How do we protect you while you are in the Community Living Center?***

The Community Living Center (CLC) is a specialized unit in our facility. It is a place designed to be a home to the residents and has a more home-like feel than the hospital. We try to preserve this unique atmosphere while maintaining control over preventable diseases. Also, the CLC cares for much less critical patients than the main hospital. For these reasons, different rules apply to the CLC than in the hospital when MRSA is concerned:

All patients will be swabbed on admission, transfer, and discharge just like in the hospital.

Staff members and residents will be asked to increase their use of hand hygiene products (alcohol gel, soap and water) to ensure everyone's health and well-being.

All patients with MRSA will receive extra education on the importance of good hand hygiene.

Patients that cannot adhere to the increased hand hygiene standards or have an active infection will be asked to perform hand washing or use alcohol gel prior to leaving their rooms for group activities.

In addition, staff will gown and glove prior to caring for infected residents and ensure that any wounds are freshly covered and fluids contained before leaving the room. In some cases, the resident may be asked not to participate in group activities until the infection is resolved.