

News of the Network

An update on developments within the
VA Stars & Stripes Healthcare Network (VISN 4)



February 2007

A Message from the Network Director

I would like to thank all of you for your hard work and dedication to honoring and serving America's veterans.

Through your personal contributions, VISN 4 has excelled in many areas over the past several years: from enhancing access to modernizing our buildings and equipment, from delivering top-notch health care quality to improving patient safety and satisfaction. As a result of your efforts, we now count ourselves among the best of VA's 21 health care networks.

As your new Network Director, I'm filled with excitement-- not only about taking on this role-- but about the opportunity we have to take the VA Stars & Stripes Healthcare Network to an even higher level of service to our veterans and stakeholders.

Improving VISN 4's performance will require us to do many things, including looking for new and better ways to deliver patient care and manage our business operations. For this reason, we will encourage and reward *innovation*.

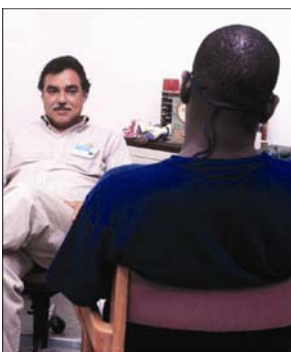
As we begin a new chapter in VISN 4's history, I look forward to working with you in the pursuit of fresh and great ideas that take our network to the next level of excellence!



Michael E. Moreland
Network Director
VA Stars & Stripes Healthcare Network



Mental Health Program Expansion Continues



VISN 4 expects to add 63 staff and receive approximately \$4 million in enhanced funding this year for our mental health programs. This is in addition to the roughly \$10 million in enhanced funding and 116 new employees allotted to expand mental health care during the past

two years. Nearly 17,000 *more* patients were treated in FY 2006 than in FY 2004, a 20% increase.

Network Serving More OIF/OEF Veterans

Through FY 2006, nearly 11,000 returning service members have either enrolled at or been treated by VISN 4 facilities. This compares to 6,900 the previous year, and 4,450 in FY 2004. A key factor in this growth has been our continued emphasis on outreach, including participation in events operated by our county, state, and federal partners.



VISN 4's MRSA Initiative Goes National

Based upon the sustained positive outcomes at our own VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System and recognizing the public health implications of MRSA, VA will now take the "Getting to Zero" initiative system-wide. MRSA bacteria are responsible for



one of most rapidly growing, virulent health care-associated infections in the U.S. Getting to Zero is intended to reduce, if not eliminate, hospital-induced MRSA infections. Through VAPHS' guidance, the other nine VISN 4 medical centers have been implementing this initiative since last summer.

VISN's Patient Satisfaction Still Above VA National Average

While VA's customer satisfaction scores continue to beat the private sector, VISN 4's scores are still besting VA's average scores in almost all comparisons. For example, our network's FY 2006 4th quarter outpatient customer satisfaction scores were better than the national average in 10 of the 11 categories. Our scores were



significantly better than the national average in four categories (access, overall coordination, preferences, and visit coordination). VISN 4's scores for the 3rd and 4th quarter inpatient customer satisfaction survey were also above the national average in *all* nine categories, and were *significantly better* in five categories (access, courtesy, emotional support, physical comfort, and transition).

More Kudos for VA Health Care

In case you missed it, the VA health care system recently received praise from four more outside sources. A Harvard Medical School study published in *Annals of Internal Medicine* concluded that federal hospitals, including those run by VA, provide the best care anywhere for some of the most common life-threatening illnesses. An article in the medical journal, *Neurology*, called VA "one of the most striking examples of American health care success." A CBS Evening News segment referred to VA health care as a system that "delivers great care at low cost." And, for the seventh straight year, VA received *significantly higher* marks than the private health care industry on a leading independent survey of customer satisfaction, the American Customer Satisfaction Index!



Join our ListServ

Our Web site now has a **ListServ** link. By joining ListServ, you will automatically receive VISN 4 newsletters and other informational items via e-mail, including our new FY 2006 annual report. This will assure you get our materials in a timely fashion, and it will help us save money in distributing them. You can access the link on our homepage:



www.starsandstripes.med.va.gov