

VA BUTLER HEALTHCARE
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News Release

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For Immediate Release

July 20, 2010

VA BUTLER NURSES WIN FUTURE OF NURSING LEADERSHIP AWARD FOR HEPATITIS VACCINATIONS PROJECT

(BUTLER, PENNSYLVANIA) – Two VA Butler Healthcare nurses were recently presented with the **Future of Nursing Leadership Award** for their project practicum on Hepatitis A and B vaccinations of high-risk Veteran patients. Adding to the importance of the award was also the fact this was the first time that staff from a VA facility has won. Previous winners included staff from Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Southwestern Vermont Medical Center, and John Hopkins Bayview Medical Center.

Patricia Nealon, Director of VA Butler Healthcare, stated: “It is truly an honor to have VA Butler Healthcare counted among these prestigious medical centers. This award is indicative of the caliber of VA staff that continually provides the ‘Best Care Anywhere’.”

As part of a continuing education program, Danielle Weisenstein, RN, (Portersville, Muddy Creek Township) and Marne Bilanich, BSN,CARN, (Butler, Butler Township) enrolled in the two year training session of The Center for Frontline Nursing Leadership to enhance their work performance and leadership abilities. The Center provides leadership skills training to more than 7,000 nurses at hospitals, medical centers and health systems across the nation. As part of the learning curriculum, the participants in the program are required to complete a project practicum at the end of their two year study to show their knowledge and application of the skills they have learned.

For their project, Weisenstein and Bilanich examined VA Butler patient trends and identified the issue of Hepatitis A and B vaccinations for high-risk Veterans as an area of consideration. The rate of vaccinations for these high risk patients was 30%, below the recommended average of 100%. “The project was not just something that we worked on for the leadership program. This was an issue we felt needed to be addressed

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to improve the well-being of our Veterans. Since implementing the program, the vaccination rate for high risk Veteran patients has increased to 100%”, stated Bilanich. The process they developed provides continuous monitoring of these identified high risk patients and a mechanism for tracking and communicating with them once they are discharged from the facility. The follow-up involves collaboration not only between the various departments within the VA, but with community organizations as well.

Vying for the coveted award, thousands of projects are submitted from across the country by the programs many participants. The projects are all varied and can be applied to any discipline. A selection committee reviews the practicums, which are anonymously submitted, and selects projects to continue onto the next round of review for final selection. When advised that they had won the award, Weisenstein and Bilanich couldn't believe they had been selected. “I had never completed a project like this prior to being in the Leadership program. There were many talented and dedicated individuals and many great projects,” replied Weisenstein. “Our project was something we believed in and it has proven to be very effective. We are proud, very proud, of our accomplishment.”

VA Butler Healthcare, located on a scenic wooded 88-acre campus in the heart of Butler County, Pennsylvania, is the provider of choice for over 17,000 Veterans throughout Western Pennsylvania and parts of Ohio. VA Butler, a member of VA Healthcare-VISN 4, provides primary care, specialty care, mental health and social support services to Veterans at its main campus and serves a rural Veteran population through community based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) in Armstrong County, southern Butler County (Cranberry Township), Clarion County, Lawrence County, and Mercer County. VA Butler Healthcare has over 600 employees and volunteers dedicated to meeting the diverse needs of America's heroes, now and in the future.

For more information about VA Butler Healthcare, and links to special programs and initiatives, interested persons can log onto <http://www.butler.va.gov>. Media queries and requests should be directed to David Virag at (724)-285-2576 or David.Virag@va.gov.



Caption for Photo:

Making lives better isn't just a motto, it's a fact at VA Butler Healthcare. Danielle Weisenstein, RN, (pictured center, left) and Marne Bilanich, BSN, CARN (pictured center, right) were recently presented the Future of Nursing Leadership award by VA Butler Healthcare Director, Patricia Nealon (pictured right), and Associate Director for Patient Care Services, Sharon Parson (pictured left), for their project practicum on increasing the number of vaccinations for Hepatitis A and B among high risk Veteran patients. States Weisenstein, "We are constantly seeking ways to improve the well-being of our Veterans."

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