



2014 ANNUAL REPORT

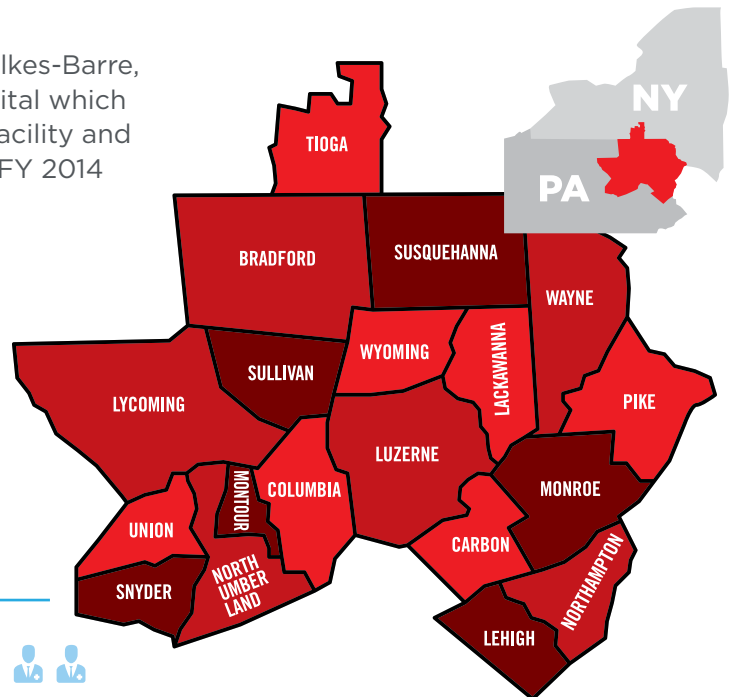
WILKES-BARRE.VA.GOV

FACILITY OVERVIEW AND STATUS

The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, located in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, is a complexity level 2 teaching hospital which provides a full range of patient care services. The facility and outpatient clinics served 38,954 unique patients in FY 2014 with over 402,000 outpatient visits.

Service Area:

The facility serves Veterans in approximately 18 counties in PA: Bradford, Susquehanna, Lycoming, Sullivan, Wyoming, Lackawanna, Wayne, Pike, Union, Montour, Columbia, Luzerne, Monroe, Carbon, Northumberland, Snyder, Northampton and Lehigh; and Tioga county in NY.



Total Employees: **1331** 

Operating Beds: **173** 

Total Unique Veterans Served: **38,954**

Total Outpatient Visits: **402,260**

**As Veterans are often seen at more than one facility, site specific unique data contains redundancies. As a result, the sum of the site specific data exceeds the actual number of Total Unique Veterans Served.

WILKES-BARRE
35,284 UNIQUE VETERANS
287,358 VISITS

ALLENTOWN
10,469 UNIQUE VETERANS
70,770 VISITS

SAYRE
3,071 UNIQUE VETERANS
19,405 VISITS

WILLIAMSPORT
4,196 UNIQUE VETERANS
14,423 VISITS

TOBYHANNA
663 UNIQUE VETERANS
1,277 VISITS

BERWICK
1,541 UNIQUE VETERANS
4,149 VISITS

NORTHAMPTON
1,386 UNIQUE VETERANS
4,878 VISITS



TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET:
\$230,547,000



BO KNOWS HEALTH CARE

Life-sized patient simulator safely trains Wilkes-Barre employees

The Wilkes-Barre VA prides itself on caring for Veterans, but one of its best patients never served in the military. He's known to the staff as "Bo".

"Bo's" real name is SimMan® 3G, and he is a \$120,000 life-sized patient simulator manufactured by Laerdal Global Health. "He is a high-fidelity manikin with an embedded computer that allows us to control various functions to create realistic scenarios that mimic human conditions," explains Susan Lewis, Wilkes-Barre's Chief of Staff Development.

"Bo" can talk, cry, sweat, bleed, convulse, go into cardiac arrest, and do nearly anything humans do when our bodies are having difficulty.

"The majority of people we train with Bo are doctors and nurses, but he can be used to train any health care professional," Lewis continues. Bo is used in nearly all simulation trainings offered at Wilkes-Barre.

Bo has been used in a variety of simulations including rapid response team training (responding to those with injuries or early signs of respiratory, cardiac, or neurological problems); patient

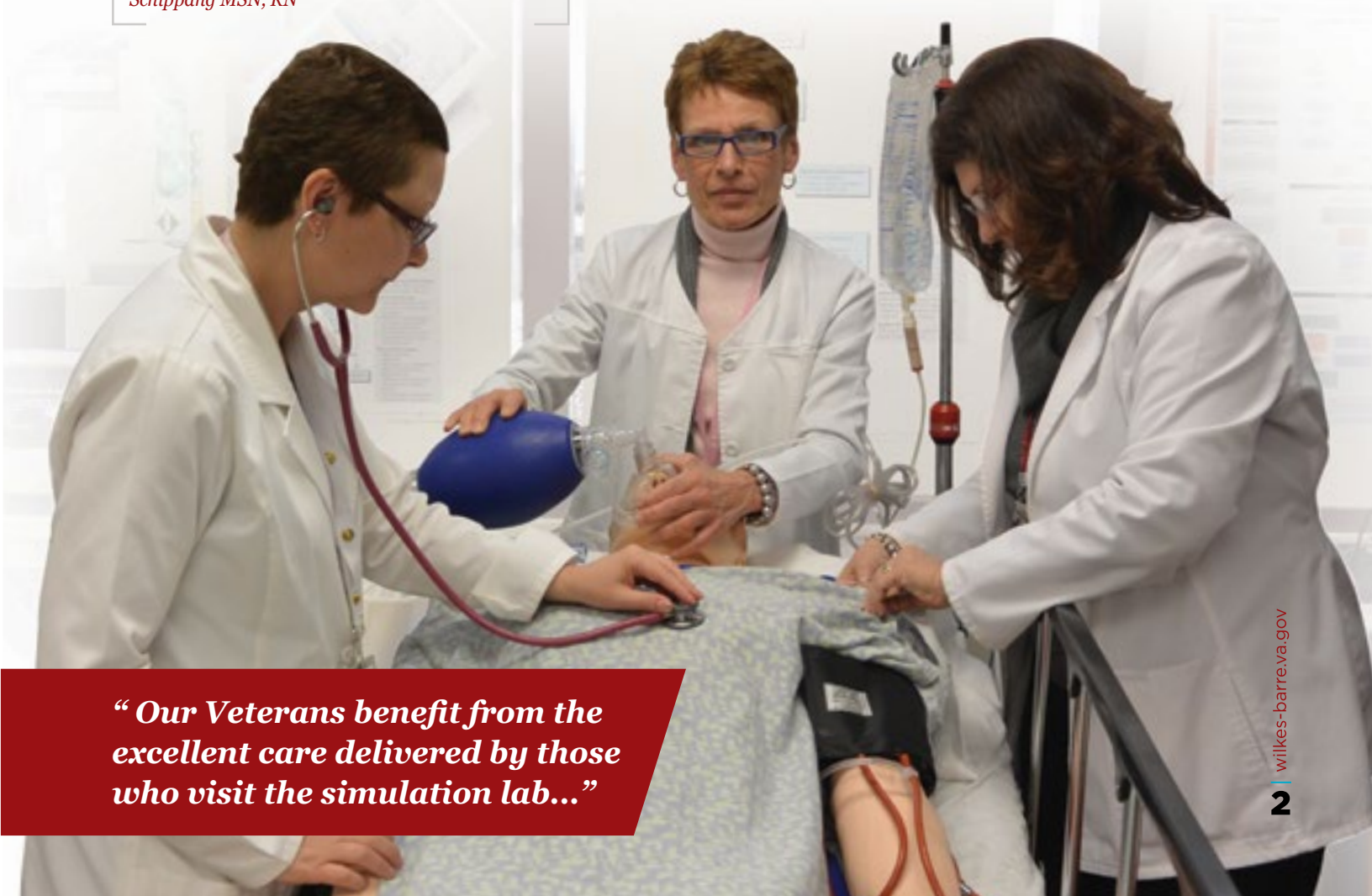


assessment training; code blue training, in which teams of medical personnel work to revive individuals in cardiac arrest; and any situation that requires a group response to a changing or critical patient condition.

Approximately 200 Wilkes-Barre employees received training on Bo in Fiscal Year 2014, and he is used two to three times a week in various exercises. Bo is available on request to physicians and other trainers throughout the hospital.

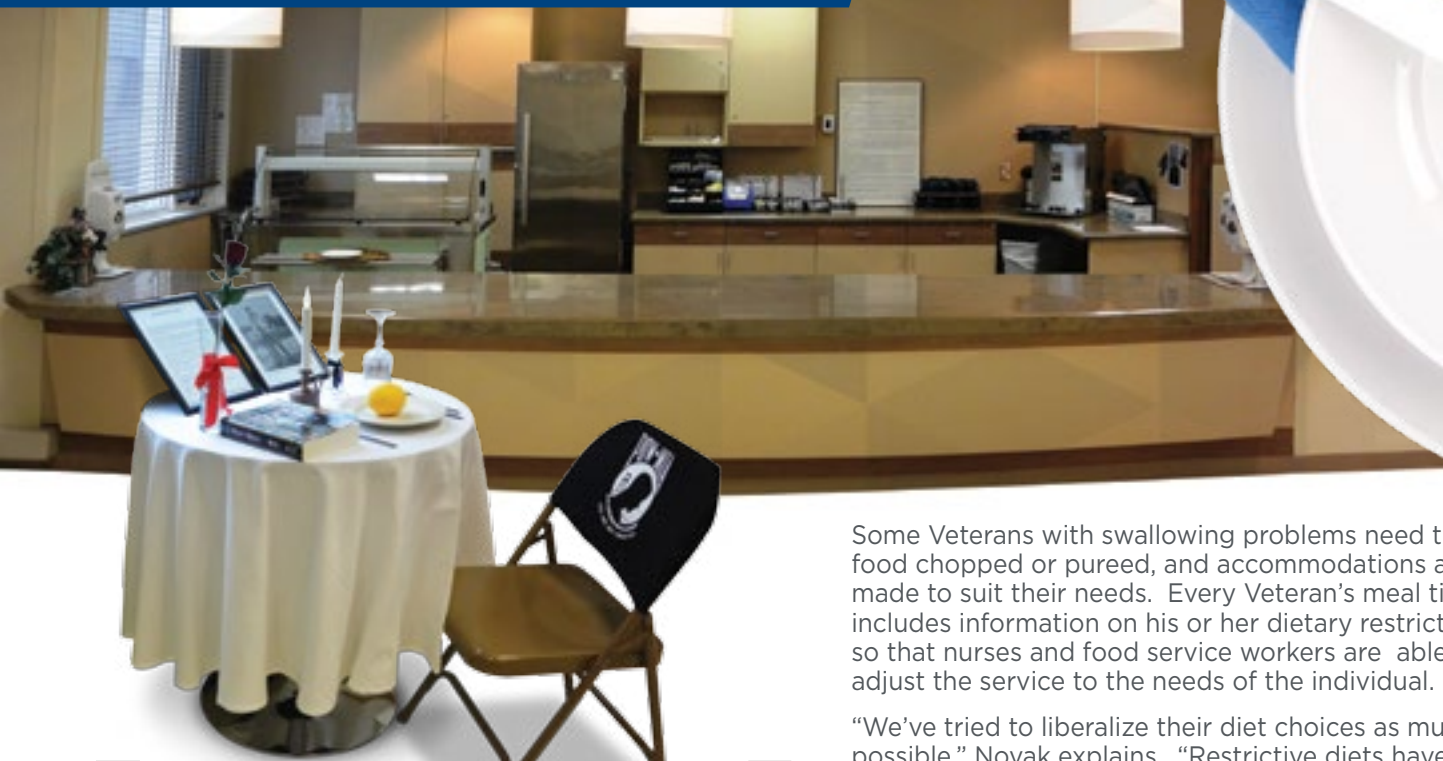
"Simulation provides nurses, doctors, and other health professionals the opportunity to learn and practice skills in a safe environment, free of concerns that accompany caring for real patients. Our Veterans benefit from the excellent care delivered by those who visit the simulation lab," Lewis concludes.

BO the Sim Man being used by staff. (L-R) Elizabeth Cope MSN, RN, Joyce Fiore MSN, RN and Sharon Schippang MSN, RN



"Our Veterans benefit from the excellent care delivered by those who visit the simulation lab..."

“It’s just a nicer atmosphere. (Veterans) enjoy coming in, sitting with their peers, and being able to order as if they were in a restaurant...”



***The Missing Man Table** (ceremony) honors POW/MIAs. It provides the symbolic message that we will never forget the soldiers left behind on foreign soil battle fields. As we give thanks, we will always honor their service & sacrifice for our freedoms and we will always strive to bring them home.*

DINING IN STYLE!

Lunch is served for residents of the Community Living Center

For many patients at Wilkes-Barre’s Community Living Center (CLC), lunchtime is now an opportunity to dine out with their friends—without ever leaving the facility!

“In July, 2014, we began using equipment that allows us to set up serving stations in our CLC dining rooms,” says Melissa Novak, Chief of Wilkes-Barre’s Nutrition and Food Services. “Our residents come to the dining rooms at lunchtime, review the offerings for the day and select their meal. It’s restaurant style service, complete with a hostess, server and all the ambiance and social interaction of a restaurant.” Novak explains.

Residents are served in courses: first the beverage, soup or salad, and bread; then the main course. Once they’re finished, a staff member comes around with a dessert cart, and provides the Veteran with a dessert option.

Some Veterans with swallowing problems need their food chopped or pureed, and accommodations are made to suit their needs. Every Veteran’s meal ticket includes information on his or her dietary restrictions, so that nurses and food service workers are able to adjust the service to the needs of the individual.

“We’ve tried to liberalize their diet choices as much as possible,” Novak explains. “Restrictive diets have not been shown to be beneficial for most people living in long-term care settings. We try to make all our meals healthy meals that anyone can enjoy.”

Novak explained other advantages of the system. “Veterans get to choose what they want at the time of the meal service,” she tells us. “And if they don’t want what we’re offering, we have options such as sandwiches as an alternative.”

The varied selections and the Veterans ability to select their meals according to their individual preferences results in a more pleasant dining experience while also generating less food waste. The number of Veterans attending meal services has increased since program implementation because the Veterans are enjoying the experience.

“It’s just a nicer atmosphere. We hear from Veterans that they enjoy coming in, sitting with their peers, and being able to order as if they were in a restaurant,” says Novak.

“This is definitely part of our patient-centered care effort,” Novak concludes. “We’ve included the CLC resident council in our discussions from the start. Residents get to choose what they want, and we get a lot of feedback from them on what they like and don’t like, which we use to inform what we serve. We even created a new dining area in response to Veterans who had difficulty accessing the locked dementia unit, where one of the existing dining areas was located.”

WYOMING VALLEY LANDMARK TO BE DEMOLISHED

New Wilkes-Barre water tower to replace existing structure built in 1952

Thanks to its prime location near the Cross Valley Expressway and Interstate 81, Wilkes-Barre's water tower has been a landmark for drivers and Veterans since its construction in 1952. Soon, however, the tower will be dismantled, recycled and replaced by a new tower that has already been constructed on the grounds

"The tower sat on the hillside for more than sixty years, so replacing it is kind of a big deal," explains Christopher D. English, PE, Chief Engineer at the medical center. The original tower has reached the end of its useful life, both in capacity and technology.

The new tank holds 400,000 gallons of water, compared to the old tank's 300,000-gallon capacity and implements the latest techniques for monitoring and maintaining a safe and potable supply of fresh water. The new tank is self-heating in winter, self-circulating to prevent stagnation, and is attached to a control monitoring system to assure proper operation. The new tower will be fully operational in the spring of 2015, with the old tower being completely recycled.

The new tower will still be a landmark, as it is located only feet from the location of the original and the VA logo on the new tower is oriented towards the residents of the Wyoming Valley. The new tower will help to assure the reliable and self-sufficient operation of the medical center should a disaster occur.

In addition to New Water Tower Project, the medical center also renovated a portion of the facility for a new phlebotomy area and completed several patch/paint projects in 2014. The New Phlebotomy Project modernized a dated portion of the facility and incorporated mechanisms for improved efficiencies within the department. While the patch/paint projects are relatively small scale, they helped to provide all the customers of the medical center with a safe, clean and aesthetically pleasing environment.

The facility also completed several infrastructure projects in 2014. While these projects are not considered as glamorous or visible as the renovation projects, these are the projects that keep the building operational. Over the last year, significant upgrades to the facility's heating, plumbing, and electrical systems were completed. These projects not only assure the safe and reliable operation of the facility, but also assure the organizations ability to sustain the provision of quality care to our Veterans.

"The tower sat on the hillside for more than sixty years, so replacing it is kind of a big deal..."



Water Tower during construction.

A RECOVERY-ORIENTED APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT

Mental Health programs help Veterans recover from PTSD, Depression, and other ailments



“BHIP teams work together to focus on Veterans’ mental health and well-being. The facility has one fully-staffed team ...”

Mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety are common in the United States. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is the most common mental health diagnosis for Veterans, followed by depression and schizophrenia.

Wilkes-Barre provides Veterans with ethical evidence-based psychotherapies for PTSD, including Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PE). Other evidence-based psychotherapies the facility offers include social skills training for those with serious mental illnesses; acceptance and commitment therapy for depression; problem solving training for adjustment issues; and behavioral couples therapy for substance use disorders.

Wilkes-Barre trained 10 health care providers in various evidence-based psychotherapies in 2014, including three providers from our outpatient clinics.

Team-Based Care

Wilkes-Barre has implemented a team-based approach to outpatient mental health care, called the Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP). BHIP teams are interdisciplinary, including mental health professionals and administrative staff such as program support assistants, clerks and others. They work together to focus on Veterans’ mental health and

well-being. The facility has one fully-staffed team.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, Wilkes-Barre’s BHIP team represented VISN 4 in a national consortium that met regularly to help teams throughout the VA to collaborate and share program work and expertise throughout the nation.

“BHIPs function much as primary care Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT) do,” says Karen Leshko, Health Systems Specialist. “Mental health clerks work with the entire treatment team to arrange Veterans’ mental health needs. Veterans are assigned treatment coordinators within the team who are their primary points of contact for mental health.”

Telehealth

The facility expanded mental health telehealth in FY 2014 by entering into an agreement with the VA New York Harbor Health Care System. Under the agreement, Dr. Douglas G. Vanderberg, a New York City-based VA psychiatrist, video conferences with patients two and a half days every week, providing medication management and consultation services for 88 unique patients in 2014. Dr. Vanderberg also visits Wilkes-Barre to talk with staff and with Veterans.

TOP (R-L) John Cattich- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), Nicole Ford- Medical Support Assistant (MSA), Tara O'Donnell- Clinical Psychologist, Mary Ann Dunn- Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), Albert Bono- Physician Assistant (PA)
BOTTOM (R-L) Sandy Thomas- Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Renee Eustice- Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) Diane Kohut- Registered Nurse (RN)



NUMBER OF WOMEN VETERANS INCREASES IN 2014

Wilkes-Barre offers new services for women, and augments existing programs

As the presence of women in the military has increased significantly in recent years, so has the number of women treated at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center and it's Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs).

Wilkes-Barre is reaching out to women Veterans in the community to tell them about the benefits and services available to them. "We conducted about 25 outreach events in 2014, all aimed at reaching women Veterans. We also talk to universities in the area, to elected officials, and others, in hopes that they will spread the word—especially to younger Veterans," explains Patricia Conroy, LCSW, Wilkes-Barre's Women Veterans Program Manager.

"One of the services we offer that many younger Veterans don't know about is our ability to coordinate maternity care for them," she continues. "We support and monitor all our pregnant patients throughout their pregnancy. We call them every other month, to make sure they know we're concerned about them, and that they know about the benefits and services that are available to them including in the post-partum period."

The phone calls ensure continuity of care for pregnant Veterans. "They are not only seen by a fee-based (a community-based health care provider outside of the VA system) OB/GYN, we're also seeing them here for any of their other issues and needs—and we're making sure our patients get the care they need from the fee-based provider. It maintains and

Program Team for Women's Health.(L-R) Sumit B. Ghosh, MD, MBA (Medical Director of Women's Health Services/Section Chief of Gynecology), Patricia Conroy LCSW, CASAC, CEDS (Women Veterans Program Manager), Lorian Manfre-Conahan, PA-C (Women's Health Services)

strengthens our relationship with our female Veterans." Conroy continues.

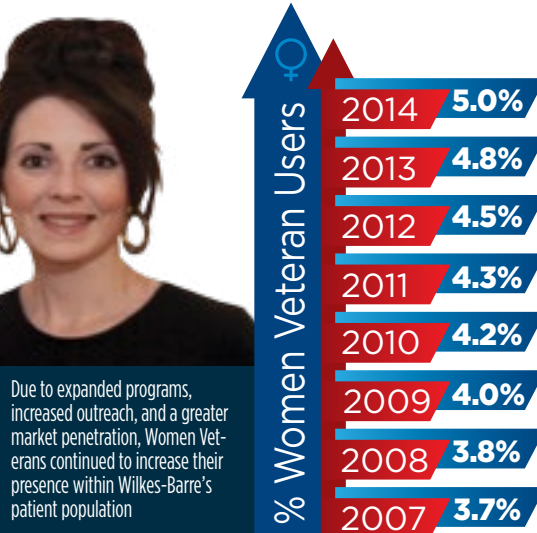
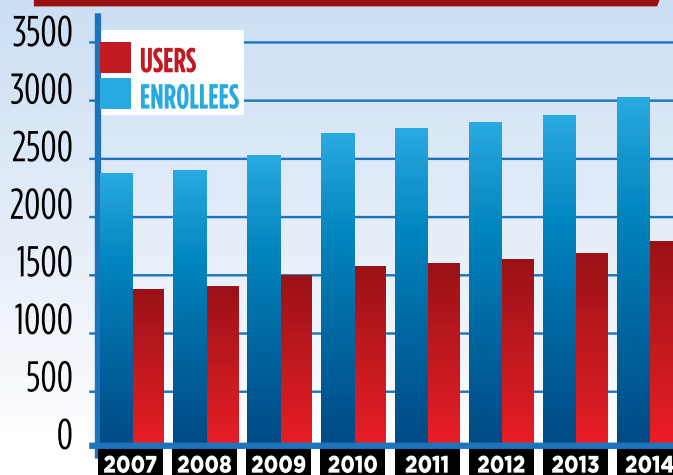
Pregnant Veterans also have access to nutrition counseling, and Pharmacy Service actively evaluates their medications regarding potential teratogenicity (the capability of producing fetal malformation). In FY 2014, Wilkes-Barre cared for 39 pregnant Veterans, 13 of whom gave birth during the fiscal year.

"We have a very strong team who provide excellent services to our women Veterans. We're very responsive to their needs, whether they have medical issues, or need help to get through the system. We do a lot of training for all Wilkes-Barre staff to ensure they are aware of women Veterans' needs—and we're making our environment both female-friendly and family-friendly!" Conroy concluded.



Women Veteran Enrollees/Users

The number of Women Veterans enrolled and receiving services from the VAMC Wilkes-Barre continued to increase in FY14 with Enrollees up 6% and Users up 6.5%



Due to expanded programs, increased outreach, and a greater market penetration, Women Veterans continued to increase their presence within Wilkes-Barre's patient population

"We have a very strong team who provide excellent services to our women Veterans..."

CARE COMES CLOSER TO HOME

Telehealth programs continue to expand

Telehealth involves the use of health informatics, disease management, and communications technologies to increase the availability of specialty and primary care, and to improve Veterans' health. The Department of Veterans Affairs is a trailblazer among health care providers in adapting these new technologies—and Wilkes-Barre is helping to lead the way.

"In 2014, we introduced tele-genomics," says Doreen Lysiak, Associate Chief Nurse for Outpatient Services. "Some of our cancer patients will undergo genetic counseling this year—and the counselors are in Salt Lake City!" Genetic counseling is the practice of telling individuals of their likelihood of inheriting genetic diseases, such as cancer, and to help them receive treatment tailored to their personal needs for those diseases.

The counselors explain issues related to family history and the chance a condition will occur and reoccur, and counsel Veterans to help them make informed health care choices and adapt to their risks or conditions. Two women received this counseling in Fiscal Year (FY) 2014.

Wilkes-Barre has also provided computer tablets to its Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). The tablets' two-way video chat feature allows physicians located at the medical center to conduct physical exams remotely, augmenting the CBOC's

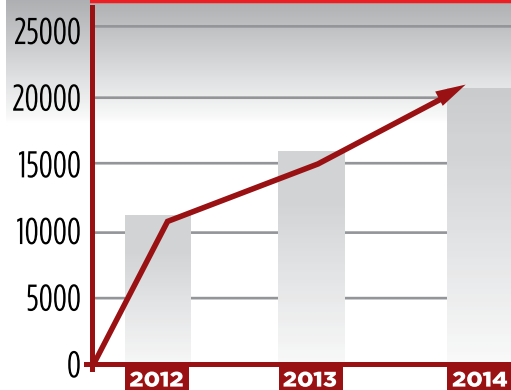
regular staff. Wilkes-Barre also will provide tablets to employees who make visits to homebound Veterans, so that these Veterans do not have to come to either the hospital or a CBOC for routine examinations.



The VAMC Wilkes-Barre utilizes Canon CR2 and CR1 cameras which allow Veterans to have un-dilated diabetic eye examinations during their primary care visits. The images can then be sent directly to an Ophthalmologist for reading without inconveniencing the patients with additional appointments.

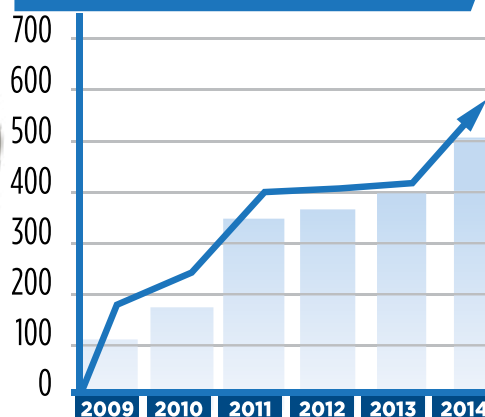
Telehealth Encounters

Telehealth Clinical Video Encounters continued to expand in FY 2014 with encounters increasing 40% over FY 2013.



Telehealth Enrollment

Wilkes-Barre Telehealth Enrollment continued to expand in FY2014 with enrollment increasing 40% over FY 2013.



WILKES-BARRE VA MEDICAL CENTER

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