



## Whole Health Program

### *A New Approach to Health Care*

Erie VA Medical Center (VAMC) is taking a new approach to improving health and treating chronic pain by offering alternative and complementary therapies as part of a new Whole Health Program.

“The concept of whole health is to teach Veterans that they have the power to take charge of their life,”

says Betsy Martin, Erie VAMC Whole Health Coach. “We teach them different ways of dealing with pain and stress management that ultimately improves their health and wellness.”

Whole Health is an approach to health care that empowers and equips each individual to take charge of their health and to live life to the fullest.

*(Continued on Page 3)*

### **Benefits of Whole Health Program**



- Augments traditional care and focuses on chronic pain.
- Invites Veterans to establish smart health goals and clarify timelines for those goals.
- Veterans become active medical consumers.
- Providers take a more patient-centered approach to care.
- Patients at high risk for suicide are identified as priorities for participation.

# Dear Veterans, fellow employees, volunteers and friends of VISN 4:

Whole health is an approach to health care that empowers people to take charge of their health and well-being, living their life to the fullest. Implementation of whole health is a top priority for VA, and the Erie VA Medical Center is the flagship site for the whole health program in VISN 4. Our cover story will give you a sneak peek of a few new and innovative programs to promote the whole health and wellness of our Veterans.

Our key areas of focus continue to be: access to care, trust in VA care, and expanding health care in the community for Veterans. As you will read in this issue, we continued to improve in all three areas during the past year.

I am proud of our team of dedicated health care professionals. They work together to provide Veterans in our region with a health care network that offers reliable access and a satisfying care experience no matter how or where the care is provided. Inside this issue, I am pleased to highlight the first two winners of the new VISN 4 I CARE Award. This award will be presented quarterly to an employee or team who not only demonstrates our I CARE values, but who go the extra mile to live by our I CARE ideals.

I hope everyone had an enjoyable and healthy summer. I enjoyed seeing many of you while I visited the medical centers and participated in conventions and community meetings. On behalf of all VISN 4 employees, I thank all Veterans and their families for continuing to utilize VISN 4 for your health care needs.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Adelman, M.D.  
Network Director



## VA Healthcare-VISN 4 Leadership Team

**Michael D. Adelman, M.D.**  
Network Director  
Since January 2016

**Charles R. Thilges**  
Deputy Network Director  
Since January 2018

**Timothy Burke, M.D.**  
Chief Medical Officer  
Since March 2016

**Beth Howard**  
Chief Financial Officer  
Since April 2018

**Moirá M. Hughes, FACHE**  
Quality Management Officer  
Since April 2014

**David E. Cowgill**  
Communications Manager  
Since January 2007

**Jo Petro**  
Executive Assistant  
Since January 2018



### Gun Safety in the Home

For someone in crisis, a locked firearm can mean the difference between a tragic outcome and a life saved. Though many Veterans are well-versed in gun safety, all Veterans and their families should understand how to properly handle and store firearms in the home.

Download our gun safety guide at [www.visn4.va.gov/VISN4/docs/gun-safety-tips.pdf](http://www.visn4.va.gov/VISN4/docs/gun-safety-tips.pdf) for some simple steps to keep you and your family safe.

Veterans are also encouraged to check into their local community resources for firearm and hunting safety courses. For additional safety, Veterans can pick up a free gun lock from their local VA medical center.

(Continued from Page 1)

*“When I went in for my appointment, my pain was at a 9. Within minutes, it was down to a 3! What a relief! This treatment not only helped with my pain, but it also helped increase my energy and focus.”*

*~ Tim Kalinowski, U.S. Army Veteran*

Whole Health goes beyond illnesses, injuries, or disabilities and instead focuses on an individual’s values, goals, health and well-being. Whole Health provides alternative tools and therapies to complement conventional medical care. This type of approach is especially beneficial to Veterans suffering from chronic pain.

“After years of struggling with pain, I decided to give the battlefield acupuncture a shot,” says Tim Kalinowski, Army Veteran and Erie VAMC patient.

“When I went in for my appointment, my pain was at a 9. Within minutes, it was down to a 3 — what a relief! This treatment not only helped with my pain, but it also helped increase my energy and focus.”

This alternative approach is quickly gaining popularity among Veterans. These complementary therapies help manage pain naturally with limited reliance on medications.

Erie VAMC is one of only 18 medical centers across the country to launch

a Whole Health Program. Erie VAMC currently offers treatments including battlefield acupuncture, manual treatments, meditation, mindfulness, Tai-Chi and Qi-gong classes in addition to whole health coaching.

Erie’s Whole Health Program plans on rolling out massage, aqua therapy, and yoga within the next year.

Interested Veterans who are currently enrolled in Erie VAMC health care can attend a Whole Health Orientation with the referral of their primary care provider to learn more about available services.

(TOP) Betsy Martin, Erie VAMC Whole Health Coach and Veteran, practices a deep breathing exercise to lower her heart rate while using the bio-feedback machine to help de-stress.

(BOTTOM) Dr. Marguerite Evanoff-Jurkovic, Erie VAMC’s Lead Whole Health Physician, provides battlefield acupuncture to Jeff Wagner, Veteran and part of Erie VAMC’s Whole Health team. Battlefield acupuncture activates pressure points in the ear to lessen pain quickly.



(FRONT COVER) Dr. Zengling Peng, part of the Erie VAMC Whole Health team, instructs the Tai-Chi class for Veterans. This mind-body practice is essentially meditation in motion and includes deep breathing exercises, meditation and mindfulness, and low impact movement.

# Care in the Community

All VISN 4 medical centers continue to work to expand provider agreements in their local communities in order to improve access to health care for Veterans. We've partnered with more than 100 new providers this fiscal year.

During fiscal year 2018 to date, VISN 4 staff coordinated more than 77,000 consults in the community. Our goal is to provide the best care possible by combining what VA does the best and what the private sector does the best.

Provider Agreements	
October 2016	789
December 2017	1,617
September 2018	2,064

Community Consults	
Fiscal Year 2016	64,013
Fiscal Year 2017	70,193
Fiscal Year 2018*	77,719

\* through September 14, 2018



# Earning Your Trust

In 2016, VA's Veterans Experience Office lead a nationwide initiative to improve our customer experiences. The goal is to foster the delivery of effective and easy customer experiences in which Veterans feel valued. To achieve this goal, they developed a customer survey using the trust questions listed below.

VA believes that trust is built one interaction at a time, and trust is earned by knowing our Veterans and showing them that we care; by understanding and anticipating their needs; by providing fair benefits and timely services; by being there when they need us; and by keeping our promises.

Today, we continue to monitor Veterans' responses to questions related to effectiveness, ease, emotion, and trust on VA surveys. Our goal is to have 90% of Veterans respond that they agree or strongly agree with these four statements. We still have a lot of work to do, especially with our specialty care patients.

Statement for Response	Inpatients				Outpatients				Specialty Care Outpatients			
	FY16	FY17	FY18*	AVG	FY16	FY17	FY18*	AVG	FY16	FY17	FY18*	AVG
<b>EFFECTIVENESS:</b> "I got the service I needed."	88.1	87.8	<b>90.1</b>	88.2	85.9	86.0	<b>87.5</b>	81.9	84.2	84.8	<b>85.1</b>	82.0
<b>EASE:</b> "It was easy to get the service I needed."	83.4	83.5	<b>84.0</b>	82.3	79.1	80.2	<b>81.5</b>	73.6	75.8	77.9	<b>77.2</b>	72.9
<b>EMOTION:</b> "I felt like a valued customer."	84.3	84.0	<b>86.1</b>	84.2	80.5	81.7	<b>83.2</b>	76.2	79.2	79.3	<b>79.0</b>	76.3
<b>TRUST:</b> "I trust VA to fulfill our country's commitment to Veterans."	83.6	84.0	<b>87.8</b>	83.9	75.3	77.7	<b>80.4</b>	72.9	73.9	76.2	<b>76.1</b>	73.6

\* compared to VA national average through July 17, 2018

# Improving Access

So far in fiscal year 2018, nearly 97% of appointments in VISN 4 were completed within 30 days of the Veteran's preferred date. Our facilities

have conducted more than 2.2 million appointments already this year, and the average wait time has been 4.3 days. (Data as of September 18, 2018)

Clinics	Number of Appointments	Wait Time <30 days (#)	Wait Time <30 days (%)	Average Wait (days)
All Clinics	2,283,597	2,176,775	96.7%	4.3
Mental Health	330,130	319,197	98.3%	2.9
Primary Care	514,677	505,203	98.2%	3.7
Specialty Care	888,817	814,052	94.4%	6.3

## Average Wait Times at VISN 4 Facilities

The table below shows how many days new or returning patients waited for a primary care or mental health care appointment in the last 30 days as of July 9, 2018. Coatesville, Philadelphia, and Wilmington are all considered high Medicaid-accepting communities.

The data on the table was obtained from VA's access and quality website

located at [www.accesstocare.va.gov](http://www.accesstocare.va.gov). The website also shows the wait times for each outpatient clinic and specialty care clinics (where available), and it includes Veteran satisfaction data and some comparisons with other local hospitals. This information is not offered by any other major national hospital organization in the country.

VISN 4 Facility	Primary Care		Mental Health Care	
	New	Returning	New	Returning
ALTOONA	16	4	7	3
BUTLER	15	1	9	2
COATESVILLE	19	2	9	3
ERIE	23	7	6	1
LEBANON	21	4	14	2
PHILADELPHIA	23	4	12	2
PITTSBURGH - UNIVERSITY DRIVE	25	8	7	2
PITTSBURGH - H.J. HEINZ	20	4	7	4
WILKES-BARRE	19	2	14	7
WILMINGTON	20	2	4	2

Above data routinely updated and obtained from [www.accesstocare.va.gov](http://www.accesstocare.va.gov).

## No-cost flu shot for VA-enrolled veterans



No cost to you  
Records updated with VA  
Just walk into your local Walgreens  
No appointment necessary

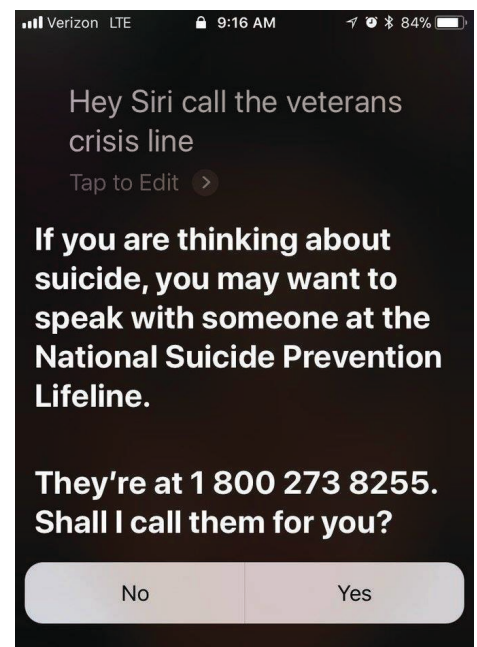


U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



## Hey, Siri...

You can now reach the Veterans Crisis Line directly with an iPhone. Simply say, "Hey Siri, call the Veterans Crisis Line," and it will connect you automatically, even if you don't have the number 1-800-273-8255 already saved in your contacts.



# AROUND the NETWORK

## WILKES-BARRE

### *Canteen and Retail Store Renovation*

This project encompasses 12,000 square feet and will provide a modern and improved dining and shopping experience for Veterans, family members and staff, while increasing the available on-station amenities for our Community Living Center Residents.

The canteen will be located on the ground floor, and the retail store will be located on first floor. The project provides an open ceiling and high glass for natural light in the seating area with a capacity for approximately 120 guests.

- **Cost:** \$4.87M
- **Construction Started:** 2016
- **Expected Completion Date:** February 2019



## ERIE

### *Patriot Café/Veterans Canteen Renovation*

The renovation of the Patriot Café/Veterans Canteen will transform the dated cafeteria into a modern, welcoming eatery for Veterans and visitors. The project includes utility systems modernization and new Veteran Canteen Service line equipment designed to enhance the Veteran experience.

- **Cost:** \$650K
- **Construction Started:** January 2018
- **Expected Completion Date:** Winter 2018/2019



(Continued on Page 8)



*I CARE represents the core values that define the basic elements of how we go about our work—“who we are”—and form the underlying principles we use every day in our service to Veterans.*

*VISN 4 established a new, quarterly I CARE award to recognize employees who not only demonstrate our I CARE values, but who go the extra mile to live by our I CARE ideals. There are many wonderful examples of employees demonstrating these values in their day-to-day work.*

**Integrity • Commitment • Advocacy • Respect • Excellence**

**1st Quarter Winner**

The Western Market Specialty and Surgical Workgroup from VA Pittsburgh and James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center in Altoona have been working since August 2017 to enhance and integrate specialty and surgical services in the western market through virtual and on-site modalities.

The goal is to improve convenient, local care to Altoona-area Veterans and to eliminate the need for travel to Pittsburgh for care. New services established by the team include chemotherapy, pain management, increased utilization of acute care, nursing staff-provided nail care, allergy shot clinic, and wound care.



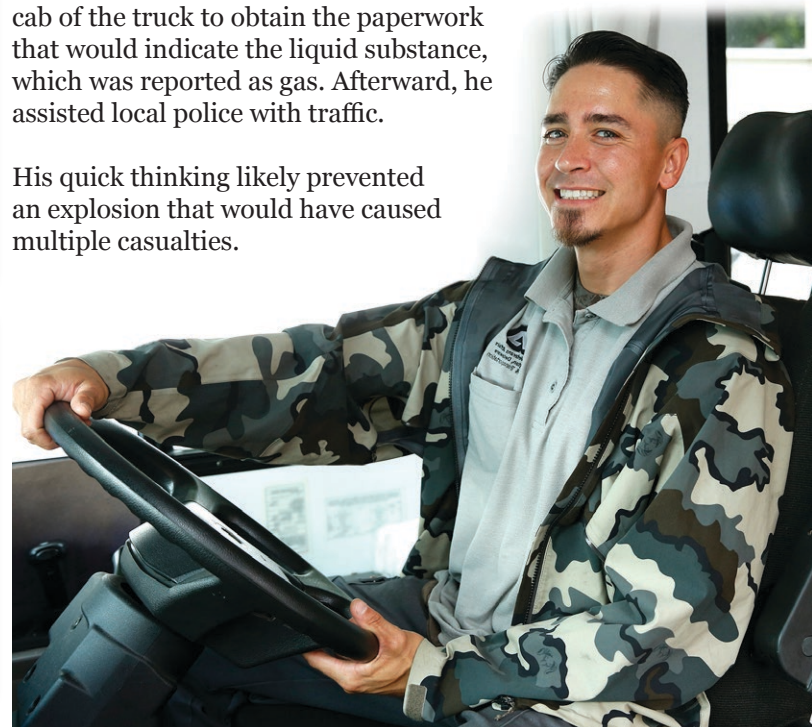
**2nd Quarter Winner**

Jonathan Davis, the mobile unit driver at Wilmington VA Medical Center, was driving on Route 1 when traffic was stopped due to an overturned tanker. There were no fire or ambulance personnel yet on the scene, so Jonathan quickly assisted several other bystanders to pull the trapped driver from the truck.



The tanker was also leaking a large amount of liquid, and Jonathan disconnected the electricity to the tanker to prevent an explosion. He then returned to the cab of the truck to obtain the paperwork that would indicate the liquid substance, which was reported as gas. Afterward, he assisted local police with traffic.

His quick thinking likely prevented an explosion that would have caused multiple casualties.



**PHILADELPHIA**



**Telehealth Clinic**

The Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center opened a new telehealth clinic space in the Bucks County Clinic in Levittown, PA.

“This telehealth clinic reaffirms our commitment to provide the best possible care to Veterans that meets their needs,” said Daniel Hendee, director of the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center.

“The great partnership with Bucks County, working with Dan Fraley, Director of the Bucks County Veterans Affairs Office, and the County Commissioners, we are able to offer this service to the Veterans in the most convenient and cost-effective manner.”

**Research Building**

The Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center also recently celebrated the opening of the newly renovated Research Building. The \$19.5 million renovation included more than 70 labs, and the renovated space affords more than 100 talented research investigators and staff the tools and space to continue the impressive life-altering research.

More than 250 research projects are currently being conducted including two large VA multi-center studies: the Million Veteran Program and the PRIME Care Study.



**VA**

**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health  
Administration  
VA Healthcare-  
VISN 4

**We've moved!**

Please note our new address below.

**VA Healthcare-VISN 4**

1010 Delafield Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15215  
412-822-3316  
www.visn4.va.gov

**We'd Like to Hear from You**

Vision for Excellence is published for the employees, volunteers, patients and friends of VA Healthcare-VISN 4. For more information about this publication, contact David Cowgill at 412-822-3318 or david.cowgill@va.gov.

**Vision for Excellence - Issue 25**

Executive Editor ..... David E. Cowgill  
Layout & Design ..... Louis Scavnicky