2019

James E. Van Zandt
VA Medical Center
Annual Report to Stakeholders

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center

James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center

2019 VISN 4 ANNUAL REPORT TO STAKEHOLDERS

Dear Stakeholders,

Our Altoona VAMC facility, along with our five community-based outpatient clinics (CBOC) in DuBois, Huntingdon, Indiana, Johnstown and State College are extraordinary places. The one thing that has become increasingly apparent to me, since my arrival more than two years ago, is that our Veterans and our staff are exceptional people. I am often heard telling everyone that this VA Medical Center (VAMC) is a special place, because heroes walk our halls every day!

Your VA is on the path of growth! Over the past year, based on your recommendations, we have added or expanded dozens of services. We have added a walk-in clinic to our Physical Therapy Department within the Altoona facility. This means that Veterans can have a physical therapists evaluate and treat them with no prior appointments or referrals from their primary care provider.

Additionally, with the addition of a new CT scanner and no helium MRI, we have developed one of the most advanced imaging centers within the region. We are able to provide high quality imaging quicker. This has increased our access to care and we have become more environmentally friendly with the reduction of helium gas.

We have also increased our surgery capability by adding cataract surgeries. This added service to our Veterans is a perfect example of how innovative our VA employees are and how much this community supports the VA. We are able to perform these surgeries because of the participation of a community doctor and the willingness from our dedicated nursing staff to accept new challenges and become trained and certified in this specialty.

We still have new opportunities moving forward. We are actively engaging community partners so that we can guarantee more Veterans have employment opportunities. We are dedicated to growing our Veteran Justice Outreach by attempting to have Veterans Courts in every county within our catchment area and we are going to continue to work with Veteran Service Organizations and the Veterans Benefits Administration to allow more Veterans to acquire service connections.

It is an honor to be your VAMC Director. Throughout my more than 30 year career as a nurse, I have never been in a place as kind, as special, as Veteran-centric as here. I promise that we will continue keeping our focus on what matters most to you, our Veterans. We will continue providing unparalleled services so that we can continue as the leader in our region for Veterans healthcare. Our exceptional services are why Veterans Choose VA!

Sigrid Andrew

Director, James E. Van Zandt VAMC

JAMES E. VAN ZANDT VA MEDICAL CENTER — ALTOONA

TOTAL EMPLOYEES

932

Employees who are Veterans 232

Nurses 207

Physicians 40

UNIQUE PATIENT TOTAL

25,525

Male 23,738 / Female 1,787

OPERATING BEDS	SURGICAL PROCEDURES	ADMISSIONS (Including Observation)	OUTPATIENT VISITS
51	1,386	697	350,228

TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET

$169,137,000

VIRTUAL CARE

Encounters completed via Telehealth 23,347

(Home Telehealth, Store and Forward and clinical video Telehealth)

CVT 11,545

Store and Forward 1,969

Home Telehealth 9,833

Telemental Health Care Encounters 9,810 (Including 4,501 VA Video Connect Visits)

Unique Veterans Used Secure Messaging 2,519

VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Volunteers 309

Volunteers Hours 42,107.50

Youth Volunteers 15

PT Walk-In Clinic Expands to Four Days a Week

By: Adam Cyr

Since July 1, 2019, Physical Therapy has been offering a walk-in clinic at the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center. Due to the success of the clinic, the department has expanded the service to four days a week, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.

Without a referral from their Primary Care team, except for compression garments, a Veteran can use the walk-in clinic for the following conditions and items: muscle and joint pain, assistive devices, braces, and pain management modalities.

Dr. Britta Boytim, Physical Therapist, is excited to see the program's continual growth, "…this expansion has greatly increased our quality of care and streamlined access to care. Our Veterans can be seen by a physical therapist almost immediately," said Boytim.

On average, a Veteran can be seen by the walk-in clinic within 10 minutes. The clinic operates on a first come – first serve basis and extended wait times may occur due to high volume. "We have the demand, it's just a matter of getting Veterans, the care they need," said Dr. Boytim.

Due to the walk-in clinic, the Physical Therapy department is able to offer more personalized care and one-on-one attention.

Michael Usjak, who has used the walk-in clinic, served in the Navy from 1962-1965. "Being able to walk in and be seen when I experience pain, has been great. The access to care and the staff have been phenomenal," said Usjak.

For more information on the Physical Therapy Walk-in Clinic or other physical therapy services at the Altoona VA, please call 814-943-8164 ext. 7117.

Physical Therapists assisting Veteran with physical therapy exercises. Photo by: Christopher Lemke

Whole Health Puts Veterans in Charge

By: Adam Cyr

Whole Health is VA's new approach to Veteran healthcare and well-being. Initiatives found in the program, are making great strides in reducing the use of opioids, anti-anxiety medication, and other therapies that involve controlled substances. Rooted in four key principles and nine elements, Veterans can develop a plan based on their values, needs, and goals. Through various grant programs and MOVE, Veterans can receive alternative treatments and therapies.

The facility made huge strides in shifting from a customer service model to a customer experience model. This new approach allows for more Veteran input which increases their well-being and enables staff to treat several ailments with services like: acupuncture, chiropractic care, yoga, and massage therapy.

Warren Tenley, Patient Advocate, who oversees the Whole Health Program, understands the importance of the program, "…In order for a health care system to remain viable, they must have non-traditional resources available to meet the unique needs of their patients," said Tenley.

Whole Health Puts Veterans in Charge - Continued

With an understanding of the Circle of Health, Veterans can fill out a Personal Health Inventory questionnaire and review the results with their Primary Care team or social workers.

Acupuncture is just one of the many non-traditional resources available to our Veterans. Photo by: AP

Pain Management Offers Alternative Treatment

By: Christopher Lemke

The medical practitioners at the James E. Van Zandt Pain Management Clinic make it a priority to assist Veterans in dealing with chronic pain. With a clear understanding of all the factors involved, the pain management team can tailor treatments to each Veterans specific needs.

The Pain Management Clinic offers treatment plans to assist Veterans in reducing pain medications. Additionally, whole health approaches such as acupuncture, physical therapy, and aqua-therapy among others serve as a complement to traditional pain management treatments. With collaborations with the local community and the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System other treatments such as personal TENs or H-Wave units can be prescribed and used by the Veteran at home, or any time the Veteran might need.

Shannon Anderson, License Practical Nurse, assists Veterans in dealing with their chronic pain issues. “Anyone with chronic pain or pain issues can come to the pain clinic for an evaluation so we can see what we can do for you” said Anderson.

For some Veterans, chronic pain is managed by medications such as opioids. These may have long-term side effects that can detract from the Veterans’ overall well being. When a Veteran first comes to the Pain Management Clinic, he/she will discuss his/her treatment plan with a highly trained team who are prepared to complement both medication therapy, and other therapies.

“I think that we’re very understanding of their situation. We assist every step of the way for our Veterans to help themselves to feel better,” said Anderson.

To set up an evaluation appointment and develop a pain management plan, Veterans must speak to their Primary Care team first and receive a consult to the clinic. Staff will call the Veteran and schedule an appointment.

Evaluation room at the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center’s Pain Management Clinic. Photo by: Christopher Lemke

Expanding Our Services to Meet Veteran Needs

By: Christopher Lemke

With over forty-five separate services, our expansion continues in a effort to meet with our Veterans' needs. Along with our expansion, we continue to add new services such as our Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanner. This scanner makes Altoona the first and only site in North America to offer resource-friendly, helium-free operating MR imaging to include full audio and visual effects for a relaxing and entertaining patient experience.

In addition to these new services, we've expanded existing services to our Community Based Outpatient Centers (CBOCs) such as Optometry, Wound Care, and Mental Health Care. This along with our latest Telehealth capabilities brings our services to the Veteran, cutting down on the need to travel long distances for healthcare.

Services at the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center:

- Audiology
- Cardiology
- Caregiver Support
- Dental/Oral Surgery
- Dermatology
- Geriatrics and Extended Care
- Gynecology
- Home Based Primary Care
- Homeless Veteran Care
- Intimate Partner Violence
- Laboratory and Pathology
- LGBT Veteran Care
- Low Vision and Blind Rehabilitation
- Mental Health Care
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Minority Veteran Care
- My HealtheVet Coordinator
- Neurology
- Nutrition, Food, and Dietary
- Occupational Therapy
- Ophthalmology - Cataract Surgery
- Optometry
- Orthopedics
- Otolaryngology

Services at the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center - Cont.

- Palliative and Hospice Care
- Pharmacy
- PMR Wheelchair Clinic
- PMR Amputee Clinic
- PMR PT Compression Stockings
- PMR Physical Therapy Triage Clinic
- Podiatry
- Primary Care
- Prosthetics
- Pulmonary Medicine
- Radiology
- Returning Service Member Care
- Smoking and Tobacco Cessation
- Social Work
- Specialty Care
- Speech Therapy
- Suicide Prevention
- Surgery
- Telehealth
- Travel Reimbursement
- Transition Care and Management
- Urology
- Women Veteran Care
- Wound Care

Services at the DuBois CBOC

- Audiology and Speech CVT
- Caregiver Support
- Home Based Primary Care
- Homeless Veteran Care
- Laboratory and Pathology
- Low Vision and Blind Rehabilitation
- Mental Health Care
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Occupational Therapy
- Optometry
- Physical Therapy
- Podiatry
- Primary Care
- Radiology

COMMUNITY BASED OUTPATIENT CARE CENTER SERVICES

Services at the DuBois CBOC - Cont.

- Smoking and Tobacco Cessation
- Social Work
- Suicide Prevention
- Telehealth
- Transition Care and Management
- Wound Care
- Travel Reimbursement

Services at the Huntingdon CBOC

- Caregiver Support
- Homeless Veteran Care
- Laboratory and Pathology
- Low Vision and Blind Rehabilitation
- Mental Health Care
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Neurology Consultation
- Optometry
- Physical Therapy
- Podiatry
- Primary Care
- Radiology
- Smoking and Tobacco Cessation
- Social Work
- Speech CVT
- Suicide Prevention
- Telehealth
- Wound Care
- Travel Reimbursement
- Transition Care and Management

Services at the Indiana CBOC

- Audiology and Speech CVT
- Caregiver Support
- Homeless Veteran Care
- Laboratory and Pathology
- Low Vision and Blind Rehabilitation
- Mental Health Care
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Optometry
- Physical Therapy CVT
- Podiatry
- Primary Care
- Radiology
- Smoking and Tobacco Cessation
- Social Work
- Suicide Prevention
- Telehealth

Services at the Indiana CBOC

- Transition Care and Management
- Travel Reimbursement

Services at the Johnstown CBOC

- Audiology and Speech CVT
- Caregiver Support
- Home Base Primary Care
- Homeless Veteran Care
- Laboratory and Pathology
- Low Vision and Blind Rehabilitation
- Mental Health Care
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Optometry
- Pain Clinic
- Physical Therapy CVT
- Podiatry
- Primary Care
- Radiology
- Smoking and Tobacco Cessation
- Social Work
- Suicide Prevention
- Telehealth
- Transition Care and Management
- Wound Care
- Travel Reimbursement

Services at the State College CBOC

- Audiology and Speech CVT
- Caregiver Support
- Home Based Primary Care
- Homeless Veteran Care
- Laboratory and Pathology
- Low Vision and Blind Rehabilitation
- Mental Health Care
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Occupational Therapy
- Optometry
- Physical Therapy CVT
- Podiatry
- Primary Care
- Radiology
- Smoking and Tobacco Cessation
- Social Work
- Suicide Prevention
- Telehealth
- Transition Care and Management
- Wound Care
- Travel Reimbursement

2019

JAMES E. VAN ZANDT VA MEDICAL CENTER

2907 Pleasant Valley Boulevard

Altoona, PA 16602

Phone: 814-943-8164

Toll-free: 1-877-626-2500

www.altoona.va.gov

Facebook.com/VAAltoona