



SUMMER 2017

My HealtheVet Helps You Manage Your Health (cont'd) .....	2	Practice Greenhealth Environmental Excellence Award .....	6
New Online Tool for Learning About PTSD Treatments.....	3	New Parking Garage .....	7
Enrollment Outreach Events .....	4	Arts and Humanities .....	7
DAV Transportation .....	4	Hypoglycemia.....	8
Altoona Medical Center – State of Our VA .....	5		



## My HealtheVet Helps You Manage Your Health

### Secure Messaging

Do you want to give an update on your current health condition? Do you want to ask for a renewal of your medicine? Use My HealtheVet Secure Messaging to communicate online with your VA health care team. Secure Messaging is a safe and secure web-based messaging service. Secure Messaging allows you to:

- Ask **non-urgent, non-emergency** health related questions
- Update your VA health care team on your health condition
- Request VA referrals and medication renewals

- Manage your VA appointments
- Ask routine administrative questions
- Receive educational material from the Veterans Health Library

Similar to email, Secure Messaging allows you to write a message, save drafts, review your sent messages and maintain a record of your conversations. You communicate online with your VA health care team members, which includes all PACT, Specialty Care, Behavioral Health and many administrative services. You can also set your preferences to

notify your personal email when a Secure Message is waiting for you in your My HealtheVet inbox.

You may send a non-urgent, non-emergency message at any time. Your VA health care team should respond to your message(s) within 3 business days. Business days are Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm (business days do not include after hours, weekends, or federal holidays).

To use the Secure Messaging feature, you must have registered on My HealtheVet as a **VA Patient** and have a Premium account.

## Manage Your Health Records

Forgot the name of a prescription medicine? Can't remember the date of a surgery? Use My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet to access your VA medical records and organize your personal health information. Members registered in My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet are able to manage their health by using My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet's Blue Button feature to customize a report or access their VA Health Summary. The VA Blue Button feature helps you better manage your health care needs and communicate with your health care team. With the VA Blue Button feature, you can:

Customize and download a report (as a PDF or text file) to share with your VA and non-VA providers:

- Print a report or summary to take to your next appointment
- Send an electronic version of your self-entered information in Secure Message to your VA health care team
- Build your Personal Health Record (PHR) by self-entering your personal information or data that you have tracked

Start building your PHR by self-entering your personal information, such as your health history, emergency contacts and medications. You can monitor your vital signs and use the journals to track your diet and physical activity. Even if you are not a Veteran, you can take advantage of this convenient way to organize your information.

If you are a Veteran who receives care from VA, you can access your VA medical records and create a customized report that can also

include your self-entered data. Many Veterans can also include a copy of their military service information from the Department of Defense (DoD).

A number of smartphone apps are also available through a variety of non-VA sources. While VA does not endorse specific apps, there are now creative, secure and easy-to-use ways of viewing Blue Button data. Search for Blue Button in your smartphone apps library to learn more.

The VA Health Summary:

- Is a Continuity of Care Document (CCD) that contains specific information
- Provides a *summary* of your health information that can be used to review your medical record and to share essential information with all of your health care providers
- Allows health information that is in one health care system to be electronically exchanged with another health care system that is providing care

You can get your VA Health Summary information in two file formats: An easy to read and print PDF and an XML format that can be read by computer systems.



To use the VA Blue Button feature and access the VA Health

Summary, you must be registered on My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet as a **VA Patient** and have a Premium account. If you do not have a My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet account, take time and Register today. Look for the VA Blue Button icon on the My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet home page after you log in to customize a report or health summary.

If you do not have a My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet account, take time and Register Today! Do not forget to opt-in to receive email notifications for Secure Messaging.

Access this convenient tool under the **Secure Messaging** tab in My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet after you log in.

## Manage Your Prescriptions and Medications

Seeking an easier way to refill your VA prescriptions? Want help with keeping your medicines organized? Use My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet to keep your prescriptions straight. My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet online prescription tools make it easier to manage your medicines.

## Keep Up with All Your VA Appointments

Want an easier way of keeping track of your VA appointments? Forgot the address of the VA facility for your clinical appointment? Can't remember the time of your appointment? You can use My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet to organize your appointments. My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet Appointments is an online feature that keeps your clinical appointments in one convenient location. This tool provides you information about your clinic appointments 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

To access VA Appointments, you must have registered on My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet as a **VA Patient** and have a Premium account. A Premium account can be obtained by a My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet member who has an Advanced account. To get an upgraded Premium account, you will need to complete, and sign VA Release of Information

Form(10-5345a-MHV). This is done before allowing you access to your VA Health record. A Premium account gives My Health-e-Vet members the highest level of access to My Health-e-Vet features.

Contact Heather McFadden at (814) 943-8164 extension 7146 if you have questions or need assistance with your My Health-e-Vet account, to upgrade to a premium account, or to learn more about any of these features.



Heather McFadden, My Health-e-Vet Coordinator

## New VA Online Tool Helps Veterans Learn About and Compare Effective PTSD Treatments

**WASHINGTON** — The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched a new online tool that will help Veterans compare various treatment options for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The PTSD Treatment Decision Aid is a free, interactive online tool that helps educate patients about effective treatment options for PTSD and encourages them to participate actively in decisions about their care.

“The health and well-being of the courageous men and women who have served their country in uniform is the VA’s highest priority,” said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. “The PTSD Treatment Decision Aid is an important step in putting Veterans in control of their health care. By helping to bridge understanding and communication between Veterans and providers about the most effective treatment options available, we

are ensuring Veterans receive the treatments that best promote their healing and recovery.”

The tool includes information about evidence-based PTSD treatments, such as talk therapy and prescription medication options. It also includes useful information designed for people who have served in the military. Users can watch videos of providers explaining different treatment options and what to expect with those treatments, and hear from Veterans who have benefited from them.

Veterans can also build a chart to compare the treatments they prefer and print a personalized summary to share with their providers. All personal information is erased once the tool is closed to protect users’ privacy.

According to VA findings, approximately eight of every 100 people will experience PTSD at

some point in their lifetimes, and almost 620,000 of the Veterans treated by VA have a diagnosis of PTSD.

“We know from research and our own clinical experience that Veterans can recover and improve their quality of life with the right PTSD treatment plan,” said Dr. Poonam Alaigh, VA’s Acting Under Secretary for Health. “We want our Veterans and those who care for them to have access to effective treatment options. Knowing about the latest research can help them get the best care possible.”

To learn more about PTSD visit the National Center for PTSD website at [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov). Health-care providers who have questions about the PTSD Treatment Decision Aid or other free resources can email the PTSD Consultation Program at [PTSDconsult@va.gov](mailto:PTSDconsult@va.gov) or call 866-948-7880.

## Enrollment Outreach Events

August 5  
**Somerset VFW**  
Somerset

August 23  
**Returning Veterans Symposium**  
Hiram G. Andrews Center,  
Johnstown

September 6-28  
**Support our Volunteers – Volunteer Bake Sale and Basket Raffle**  
Altoona VA Medical Center

September 15  
**POW/MIA Recognition Ceremony**  
11 a.m.  
Hollidaysburg Veterans Home

September 19  
**Veteran Roundtable**  
Altoona VAMC

September 21  
**Veteran Health Fair**  
Altoona VAMC

September 27  
**Veteran Roundtable**  
PennState DuBois

September 27  
**Wyotech Registration**  
Blairsville

For more information on these events please contact VA Public Affairs 1-877-626-2500 ext. 7991.

## DAV Transportation

The James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center (VAMC) in coordination with the DAV and Clearfield and Jefferson county officials, will be offering free rides for Veterans in Clearfield and Jefferson Counties. Transportation will be available Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in Clearfield county to the DuBois VA Outpatient Clinic, and Tuesdays transportation will be offered from the DuBois VA Outpatient Clinic to the Altoona VA Medical Center. Jefferson County will be providing transportation on Mondays to the DuBois VA Outpatient Clinic.

Request for transportation must be made a minimum of 5 business days in advance. In order to use the DAV Transportation Network, Veterans must be able to get in and out of the vehicles unassisted. If the individual has mental conditions that inhibit his/her ability to function cognitively, he/she must be accompanied by an aid/attendant.

Please schedule all medical appointments between 9:00 AM and 1:00 PM for the DuBois

clinic. For Tuesdays Altoona transportation, appointments should be between 9:00 and noon so drivers can provide transportation accordingly.

To schedule a ride in Clearfield County, please call 814-765-2642 ext. 3008.

To schedule a ride in Jefferson County, please call 814-849-1529.

You may want to consider becoming a valued member of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as a volunteer driver or scheduler. You could provide transportation to Veterans who need to go to the VAMC in Altoona or the DuBois VA Outpatient Clinic for appointments.

You can get a Driver Application by contacting: The Altoona VAMC Volunteer Office at 1-877-626-2500 ext. 7141, or amy.detterline@va.gov. We will mail or e-mail you an application. All drivers must pass a background check and a medical clearance. DAV vehicles and training are provided.



Rob Williams, DAV Hospital Service Coordinator

## Altoona VA Medical Center – State of our VA by Interim Director, Charles Thilges

At the beginning of summer, Veterans Affairs Secretary, Dr. David Shulkin, clearly stated the challenges facing the Department of Veterans Affairs. Let me explain what is happening in the Altoona VA Medical Center and its five outpatient clinics, and what we are doing to improve services to our Veterans.

First and foremost, we are focused on the five priorities that have been outlined by Secretary Shulkin. These are 1. Greater choice for Veterans, 2. Modernizing our systems, 3. Focusing our resources more efficiently, 4. Improving timeliness of services, and 5. Suicide prevention. All employees in our VA Medical Center and VA Outpatient Clinics are committed to these priorities.

We are working hard to recruit, hire and place new doctors, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners in primary care, behavioral health and specialty care services. While this can be difficult in a large rural area, we believe that serving Veterans is an honorable career choice and there are still doctors, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, nurses and others who want to be part of this call of duty. If you or you know someone who may be interested, please have them call our Human Resources office at (814) 943-8164 extension 7039.

We are also partnering with the Pittsburgh VA Healthcare System physicians, utilizing telehealth, and finding new and creative ways that we can bring specialty care services into our community, instead of sending Veterans to

Pittsburgh. These initiatives will take time to fully develop, but we are optimistic that services which have not been available in Altoona for quite some time will be provided here.

In concert with Secretary Shulkin's initiative to prevent Veteran suicide, we are working closely with our community partners to identify local resources for Veterans who are in crisis. We have added a second Suicide Prevention Case Manager and we are offering emergency mental health services to all Veterans, (including those with less than honorable discharge, who otherwise would not qualify for VA health care benefits). We are committed to the Secretary's "Getting to Zero" initiative as VA's number one clinical priority.

Regarding choice and timeliness of care, we understand the significant amount of frustration that has resulted from the administration of the Veterans Choice Program. In many cases, this program created delays in care in our area where previously, there were none. In our Town Hall meetings, employee meetings, and discussions with Veteran Service Officers, we have heard loud and clear that the administrative burden of the Choice program has made it difficult to get care. We have shared these concerns with the VA Office of Community Care. Because of the voice of Veterans, we are seeing some significant and positive changes which will consolidate and modernize the care in the community programs for Veterans. We are optimistic that the problems with the Choice

program will soon be in the past.

In the past three years, VA has experienced the most difficult period in our 200 year history, but the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center has been serving Veterans in this region since 1950, and we believe that the best years are still ahead.

I personally wish to thank Veterans, their families, VA employees, Veteran service organizations, elected officials, and community members for the support and trust you have given to us, especially during these past three years. There will always be a reason why Veterans Choose VA, and as a Veteran myself, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve those who Choose VA.

Kind Regards

Charles Thilges  
Interim Director  
James E. Van Zandt VAMC



The James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center has six locations and offers health care services to Veterans living in a 14 county area of Pennsylvania including Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Huntingdon, Indiana, Jefferson, Juniata, Mifflin, and Somerset. The medical center is a member of VA Healthcare – VISN 4.

## Practice Greenhealth Environmental Excellence Award

We were selected as the recipient of six 2017 Practice Greenhealth Environmental Excellence Awards.

Awards include:

**1. Greenhealth Top 25 Award – The Top 25 Environmental Excellence Award** is Practice Greenhealth’s highest honor for hospitals. Selected from the Greenhealth Partner for Change Award applicants, the 25 hospitals selected are leading the industry with innovation in sustainability, demonstrating superior programs and illustrating how sustainability is entrenched in their culture. Competition was fierce this year, with many advanced and innovative programs at member hospitals vying for these 25 spots.

Each Circle of Excellence recognizes a hospital for outstanding performance in one specific area of expertise (outstanding performers in Waste, Energy, Food, and more); Circles of excellence are given to the Top 10 facilities in each category.

**2. The Circle of Excellence Award for Leadership;** It all starts with leadership. The Leadership Circle represents the top performers with a strong infrastructure supporting a long term commitment to healthier environments through committee structure, reporting, data tracking, communication and education.

**3. The Circle of Excellence Award for Chemicals;** This Circle celebrates facilities with sound chemical reduction policies and practices. Winners address toxicity through purchasing, change of products, services and equipment, and educate their staff and the community on hazardous chemicals.

**4. The Circle of Excellence Award for Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP);** The EPP Circle celebrates the best in environmentally preferable purchasing (EPP) programs. Facilities were evaluated on their supporting policies, interactions with GPOs and suppliers, environmentally preferable contracts and use of environmental attributes in RFPs and business reviews.

**5. The Circle of Excellence Award for Energy;** The Energy Circle celebrates hospitals that are leading the sector in energy efficiency. Leaders generally have energy managers and written

programs to reduce energy use over time. They are tracking energy use intensity, ENERGY STAR performance metrics, and share details on project implementation and staff engagement strategies.

**6. The Circle of Excellence Award for Climate;** The Climate Circle highlights visionary hospitals taking the lead on tracking and measurement of CO2 emissions, and overall climate program development. Hospitals in this Circle demonstrate an understanding of the health impacts of climate change and are taking action to mitigate those impacts and educate their staff and communities on playing a supporting role.

With this year’s awards the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center has now won the **Top 25 Award** for the last four years in a row. Circles of Excellence in Leadership, Chemicals, EPP, Energy and Climate validate this facility as one of the top hospitals with multiple Circles of Excellence.



Left to right: Charles Thilges, Interim Director; Glenn Holsinger, Environmental Health Specialist; Timothy Blackburn, GEMS Program Manager; Richard K. Hofman, GEMS Policy and Oversight

## New Parking Garage

On June 5, we opened the 117,000 net square foot, three-tier parking garage which provides a total of 324 parking spaces and an additional 79 surface level parking spaces. Some of the features the garage include; two elevators, covered walkway from the garage to the medical center's main entrance, improved traffic flow around the garage, beautiful native plantings, a future VA Police Department Office, and expandability of three additional tiers in the future.



*Free parking garage*

## Arts and Humanities

VA has been a leader in providing Creative Arts to promote recovery, health, fulfillment, and joy for Veterans. Along with improving quality of life, the arts and humanities enhance and maintain physical and cognitive abilities, provide opportunities for social communication skill development, creative expression, as well as spiritual expression. In the VA health care system, Recreation Therapists and Creative Arts Therapists provide therapeutic interventions for Veterans who are receiving care.

Therapists use techniques, tools, and materials of their unique discipline for therapeutic purposes in engaging Veterans in opportunities that promote and support creative self-expression, leisure development, health promotion, and disease prevention that integrates function, quality, and meaning to one's life.

Altoona VA staff are coordinating arts and humanities programs to

help Veterans incorporate these activities into their lives as part of their overall health plan. Our healing arts program at the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center consists of the following activities:

- Soulful Repair – Creative Writing Group hosted by Chaplain Lew Button
- Creative Expression – Creating writing/art group for CLC residents
- Two Day Art Show February 2017
- Reiki for Veterans, Volunteers and Employees – First Wednesday of every month, VAMC Auditorium 10 a.m. to noon – Contact Andrea Young at extension 7404.
- Arts from the Heart, Tuesday entertainment series 2017 – performers have been invited to entertain on Tuesdays

throughout the summer – Contact Amy Detterline at extension 7046.

- Art Gallery Wall – Coming soon a rotating gallery wall in the corridor between Voluntary and Recreation services and the chapel at the VAMC.



*Artwork created by CLC Veterans*





2907 Pleasant Valley Blvd | Altoona, PA 16602

Toll free: 877-626-2500

## Hypoglycemia



Hypoglycemia is a low level of blood sugar. A person may tremble, feel nervous or jittery, break out in a cold sweat, have a headache, or feel sick to his or her stomach.

Blood sugar levels are measured in mg/dL. A fasting blood sugar level of 70 to 99 mg/dL is normal, 50 to 70 mg/dL is mildly low, and less than 50 mg/dL is very low.

If blood sugar, also called glucose, continues to fall, a person may experience mood changes, such as irritability, anxiety, restlessness, anger, or confusion. And he or she may have symptoms such as weakness, blurred vision, dizziness, fatigue, and poor coordination.

Hypoglycemia may also result from taking certain medicines or

drinking alcohol. It can also be caused by certain health problems, such as your body not using carbohydrates properly or having an enzyme problem. Sometimes the cause is unknown.

Treatment for a sudden (acute) episode of hypoglycemia involves eating or drinking some form of sugar to restore blood sugar to a normal level. Episodes of hypoglycemia caused by a long-term (chronic) health condition are treated the same way. But to prevent future episodes of hypoglycemia, treatment or cure of the long-term condition is needed.