

Connected Care Newsletter

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James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center



What is Connected Care?

Connected Care encompasses several technologies used by the VA to enhance the Veteran experience. These advances in technology change the way healthcare has traditionally been delivered. The value VA derives from Telehealth is how VA uses health informatics, disease management, case management, and telehealth technologies to facilitate access to care and improve the health of Veterans with the intent to provide the right care in the right place at the right time.

What Services Do We Offer?

Home Telehealth (HT) – HT is “remote monitoring telehealth” where telehealth technologies are used to communicate health status and capture and transmit data. Devices are placed in your home, typically if you have a chronic disease such as diabetes, heart failure, chronic pulmonary disease, hypertension, obesity, etc. and these conditions are monitored by care coordinators.

Clinic-Based Video Telehealth (CVT) – CVT is the use of real-time interactive video conferencing, sometimes with supportive peripheral technologies to assess, treat, and provide care to a patient remotely. Patients can come to Altoona, or one of the CBOCs, and see a provider located in Pittsburgh or another VA, saving the patient the time and costs associated with traveling.

Store-and-Forward (SFT) – SFT is the use of technologies to acquire and store clinical information (e.g. data, images, sounds) that is then forwarded to a provider at another VA location for clinical evaluation. For example, patients can come to Altoona, or one of the CBOCs, and a Telehealth Clinical Technician (TCT) can take a photo of their retina using TeleRetinal Imaging equipment to send to an Optometrist saving the patient the time and costs associated with traveling.

VA Video Connect (VVC) – VVC enables patients to conduct live video visits with his or her provider in a secure and private Virtual Medical Room simply by using the camera and microphone on their phone, computer, or tablet – from the comfort of their home. Newly available peripherals allow the patient to provide his or her provider numerous vital signs such as weight, blood pressure, pulse oxygen levels, among others to allow for a more complete assessment.

My HealthVet – My HealthVet provides patients with opportunities and tools to make informed decisions and manage their healthcare. With My HealthVet patients can view, refill, and track most prescriptions, view and print information from their medical records, communicate securely with their VA healthcare team via Secure Message, and manage upcoming appointments and receive reminders. Veterans with a Premium account can schedule and cancel VA appointments with participating clinics. Other features include VA Health Summary and VA Blue Button Reports.

NEW CVT AND VVC CLINICS HAVE BEEN ADDED!

Clinic-Based Video Telehealth

(CVT): The patient is in Altoona or a CBOC and sees a provider using video telehealth.

New Operational Clinics with Pittsburgh VAMC:

- General Cardiology CVT
- Suboxone CVT Clinic
- Cancer Survivorship CVT Clinic
- Cochlear Implant Clinic
- Pain Management Clinic
- Hepatology and GI Clinics
- CVT Oncology
- CVT Neurology Headache Clinic
- Infectious Disease
- Plastic Surgery – Hand
- Pulmonary CVT Clinic
- CVT Hub and Spoke Psychology Clinic
- CVT Caregiver Support Therapy

- CVT Telerenal Transplant Clinic (from Bronx VAMC)

CVT Clinics in Development:

- Ortho CVT Clinic
- CVT/VVC Lactation Clinic

VA Video Connect (VVC):

The patient is at home or another physical location and sees a provider in Altoona, a CBOC, or another VAMC using their personal smart device.

New Operational Clinics:

- VVC Tick Bite Clinic from Butler VAMC
- VVC Tele-Urgent Care Clinic

VVC Clinics in Development:

- VVC HISA and Home Safety Evaluations for Physical Therapists

Telehealth Clinic Spotlight: TeleChemotherapy

Like most oncologists, Dr. Vida Passero often oversees her patients' chemotherapy treatment. Some of those patients just happen to be 100 miles away. Along with heading the hematology and oncology division of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, Passero leads the country's first remote chemotherapy clinic.

From her office in Pittsburgh, Passero oversees cancer care and chemotherapy treatment for Veterans at the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center in Altoona, Pennsylvania — a two-hour drive east.

During appointments, the trained staff at the virtual cancer care clinic in Altoona uses state-of-the-art tools such as the TotalExam 3 camera to send images and live video to Passero and the oncology team in Pittsburgh.

For Veterans in central Pennsylvania, the clinic offers the opportunity to receive chemotherapy treatment without making the long trip to the Pittsburgh VA facility. The convenience of receiving care closer to home makes a huge difference for patients and their families, said Passero.

"Patients and caregivers tell me, 'We love this technology because it saves us so much travel, time, and money,'" she said.

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The only other clinic that has conducted similar remote video telehealth treatments, Passero said, is in Australia. But she thinks this innovative system will spread as the Altoona clinic treats more patients. "This is going to be the next frontier," she said. People are taking notice of the clinic's efforts.

In 2018, the project won an ICARE Award from the regional VA network, VISN 4. And this year, the telehealth clinic received commendation from VA Secretary Robert Wilkie and Dr. Richard Stone, executive in charge for the Veterans Health Administration.

Passero said other sites are looking to adopt the remote chemotherapy model that Altoona has pioneered. "We were able to get this project, which was thought to be impossible, off the ground," said Passero. "People in the private sector have been asking, 'How did you do this?' It just shows how VA can be innovative."

-Excerpts from the Connected Care Blog

How Can Home Telehealth Help

The Home Telehealth Program involves facility-based care coordinators, home monitoring equipment, and telecommunications to promote your health, particularly if you have high-risk, chronic diseases. HT helps you **manage your disease** and **avoid complications** that might lead to hospitalization or permanent long-term care placement.

Enrolled Veterans will receive education and support from an RN Care Coordinator. The support received includes daily monitoring which can help Veterans avoid complications that could leave to emergency room visits and hospital admissions. HT can potentially reduce healthcare costs and allow providers to better monitor Veteran care and be more proactive in preventing healthcare crises.

The following diagnoses may qualify for HT:

- Heart Failure
- Diabetes
- Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease
- Hypertension
- Weight Management – TeleMOVE!

Should you be interested in learning more about what Home Telehealth can do for you, contact Jennifer Toth, RN, at (814) 943-8164, ext. 8105.

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Stay Connected to your Health Care with My HealthVet

VA offers a variety of health-related mobile apps for Veterans to help them take control of their health care from the palm of their hands. Veterans with a My HealthVet Premium account can access these apps that will either be downloaded directly to a mobile device or through a mobile-friendly website.

One of the newest apps is the Annie App, which promotes self-care for Veterans by sending the patient automated messages that prompt you to track your own health. You are asked to reply to messages so that Annie can let you know how you are doing. Annie can also send you messages from your local VA facility.

For more information, visit www.myhealth.va.gov or contact Heather McFadden, My HealthVet Coordinator, at (814) 943-8164, ext. 7146.