

Veterans' Healthy Living

VA New England Healthcare System

Winter 2008

Prostate Issues:
A Growing Problem

Winter Sports Clinic

VA Suicide
Prevention Hotline



From War Zone to Home

Message From the Network Director



Jeannette Chirico-Post, M.D.
Network Director

Dear Veterans:

VA is ready and waiting for the return of the men and women who are serving in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. When the newest generation of veterans return from deployment, a team from the VA New England Healthcare System is there to let them know that they will be cared for. If you have recently returned home from combat, or if you have a loved one serving, find out more about the available benefits by reading the article on pages 4 and 5 in this issue of *Veterans' Healthy Living*.

When our service members come home, they may discover—like their family members before them—that dealing with the experiences of combat can be difficult. VA recognizes that post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health problems are serious illnesses and we have programs in place at every medical center to help our veterans. In addition, VA is partnering with Vet Centers and other agencies to make available the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-8255, a toll-free number that veterans can call anytime—24 hours a day, seven days a week—if they feel they need help. Read more about this on page 7.

VA continues to focus on weight management and the importance of physical activity. One popular program is the “Champions Challenge,” a national program jointly sponsored by VA and Healthier US Veterans. This program encourages physical activity and runs from November 2007 to March 2008. Another VA weight management program – MOVE! (Managing Overweight and/or Obesity for Veterans Everywhere) – helps veterans deal with concerns about obesity and is available at all of our facilities. On page 6 you will read about the New England Winter Sports Clinic for Disabled Veterans, a program that promotes rehabilitation and physical well-being through sports.

As we begin the new year, let us remember the families across the nation whose loved ones are overseas fighting for our freedom. Best wishes for a happy and healthy new year!

Jeannette Chirico-Post, M.D.
Network Director



Have you registered to use the My Health Vet (MHV) web site yet? It's a simple process that can open up a wealth of health information to you and your family.

www.myhealth.va.gov

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Visit us on the Web at

www.visn1.med.va.gov

Veterans' Healthy Living

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Prostate Issues: *A Growing Problem*

If you're a male under the age of 50, you might not know much about your prostate gland. But after that age, almost half of all men will become very aware of the gland as it undergoes changes that can affect their lifestyle.

When a young man reaches puberty, the prostate gland begins to grow. After puberty, growth stops and the gland remains mostly unchanged until between the ages of 30 and 40, when it slowly begins growing again. For many men, the growth doesn't stop and this is what can cause problems.

According to Subbarao Yalla, M.D., urologist at the West Roxbury VA campus and former chief of urology for the VA Boston Healthcare System, there are three important problems related to the prostate: prostatitis, benign prostatic enlargement, and prostate cancer.

The least common of all three conditions is prostatitis, which is an inflammation of the prostate sometimes caused by an infection. Symptoms of prostatitis can include frequent and/or urgent urination as well as pain and discomfort in the bladder. While this condition occurs in younger men and can be difficult to diagnose, it can be cured and does not lead to prostate cancer.

Benign prostate enlargement, also known as BPH (benign prostate hyperplasia), is the most common prostate problem among men. Between the ages of

50 and 60 about one-half the male population will develop it; by the age of 80, almost 90 percent will have had some of the symptoms of BPH. A frequent and urgent need to urinate, a weak urine stream, bleeding, and incomplete emptying of the bladder are all signs of BPH.

Prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer among men. There are no symptoms of this slow-growing disease until it is in the latter stages. When signs do occur, they are similar to those of BPH. Because of this, VA recommends that men age 50 and older, those with any of the symptoms, and those with a family history of prostate cancer be screened yearly.

In its early stages, prostate cancer is detected by a blood test that measures the prostate specific antigen in the blood. "This is a relatively simple procedure that has been shown to be very promising in detecting early cancers, thus leading to early treatments," says Dr. Yalla.

Prostate cancer can be successfully treated, but the options vary depending on the man's age and general health. To learn more about what you can do to lower your risk of prostate cancer, talk to your VA primary care provider.



Subbarao Yalla, M.D.

Don't know much about your prostate gland and how to keep it healthy?

You can find the answers to your questions about prostate health and other health issues at www.myhealth.va.gov/.

My Health_eVet (MHV) is a Web site dedicated to the health of the men and women who have served our country. The site provides two extensive online medical libraries for you to research your topic of interest using MedlinePlus[®] and HealthWise[®], and also provides access to your Personal Health Journal, VA prescription refill service, and links to Federal and VA benefits and resources. In the future, MHV registrants will be able to view appointments, copay balances, and key portions of their VA medical records online.

If you don't have access to the Internet at your home or at the home of friends or family, check your local library.

From War Zone to Home

VA Helps Returning Vets Make the Adjustment

It was never easy. Over the years, soldiers returning home from war found that, as happy as they were to be back, picking up where they left off could be difficult. While VA has recognized that struggle and assisted with that transition in the past, today VA is reaching out even more to help our returning servicemen and women.

The first step is access to care. “We do a massive amount of outreach,” says Mel Tapper, PhD, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) lead program manager for the VA New England VA Healthcare System.

At demobilization events and other post-deployment events, a Network team of OEF/OIF staff and mental health professionals meet with returning veterans to discuss VA health care, enrollment, and any readjustment issues they may be experiencing. “We’re going out from our VA facilities to bring the veterans in,” says Tapper. “If they don’t come in today, they might someday.”

Tapper says most importantly, the OEF/OIF team is trying to spread the word to the new young veterans and their families that VA is ready and waiting to provide for their health and wellbeing. In fact, any active duty service member, reservist and National Guard member who served in theater after November 11, 1998, and meets eligibility criteria is eligible for care for two years after their discharge date. (For some veterans, the time period may be even longer.)

To help new OEF/OIF veterans take advantage of their health care benefits, each VA medical center in the Network has a Returning Combat Veteran Program Manager who coordinates the veterans’ entry into VA health care. (Please see sidebar for the names of the program managers at each VA medi-

cal center in the Network.) The first step is a comprehensive assessment of any needs—health care and otherwise—that a veteran may have. After that, a case manager is assigned to the veteran to assure that his or her needs are met. “The veterans don’t need to seek out the help they need,” says Tapper. “The case manager will be sure they get it.”

For the newest generation of veterans, special emphasis is being placed on traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder, and polytrauma, which is the occurrence of injuries to several body areas or organ systems at the



Soldiers fill out paperwork after returning home.



VA employees are available for on-site screening with mobile health-care.

same time, where one or more of which is life-threatening. Across the VA New England Healthcare System, specialized processes are in place to care for veterans with health care needs.

While VA services are available to OEF/OIF returnees as well as other veterans, VA is making an extra effort to be sure this youngest set of service men and women are aware of the care for which they are eligible. “We welcome you in,” says Tapper to veterans. “We have the comprehensive care that is tailored to meet your needs.”



Incoming veterans can learn about the many available VA services during Welcome Home events.



The Returning Combat Veteran Program Manager at your local VA Medical Center (VAMC) is available to provide additional information and assistance.

Bedford, MA VAMC
Elizabeth Price, LCSW
781-687-3067

VA Boston Healthcare System
Mel Tapper, PhD, LICSW
857-364-6780

VA Connecticut HCS
Erin Blatchley, RN, MS
203-932-5711 x 7975

Manchester, NH VAMC
Terrie Raposo, MSW, LICSW
603-624-4366 x 6040

Northampton, MA VAMC
John Laneve, MSW, LICSW
413-584-4040 x 2143

Providence, RI VAMC
Susannah Mozley, PhD
401-273-7100 x 2207

Togus, ME VAMC
James Hammond, LCSW
207-623-8411 x 5360

White River Junction, VT VAMC
Dan Moriarty, LICSW
802-295-9363 x 5362

Returning veterans and their families are able to learn more about VA health care by visiting www.myhealth.va.gov/, a complete source for VA health care benefits and services.

Winter Sports Clinic:

Physical Rehabilitation and Beyond for Disabled Vets

The New England Winter Sports Clinic for Disabled Veterans marked its 11th year in January. This year's clinic was held on January 14-18, 2008, at Mount Sunapee, N.H. While physical rehabilitation through sport is the main goal of the clinic, says Ralph Marche, head of voluntary service at the Boston VA Healthcare System, its benefits extend beyond that. "Renewal of mind, body, and spirit, freedom, re-connection with family and other veterans . . . this is what the clinic does for veterans," explains Marche.

During the weeklong clinic, the focus is on adaptive downhill skiing, but veterans are also introduced to snow boarding and air rifle shooting. Other events include snow mobile rides, wheelchair basketball, and an awards banquet. Participation in the clinic is open to veterans with spinal cord injuries, orthopedic amputation, visual impairments, certain neurological problems and other disabilities. The families of the veterans are also welcome to attend.



Downhill skiing at the New England Winter Sports Clinic for Disabled Veterans.

Marche says the winter clinic has been so well received that he is working on offering a summer clinic that would possibly feature kayaking, fly-fishing and horse back riding.

"This is one way we promote healthy lifestyles to disabled veterans," says Marche. "We issue physical aids and artificial limbs to help our soldiers get through their lives, but it is through adaptive sports and activities that we can offer a "prosthetic for the soul" to help them live their lives."

To learn more about the New England Winter Sports Clinic, contact Marche at 857-364-5071 or Ralph.Marche@va.gov.

Participants at last year's Winter Sports Clinic.



Ready to Help:

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

A recent study of the health records of veterans who sought care from VA medical facilities after returning from active duty in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) found the most common combination of diagnoses was post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. Young soldiers were three times as likely as those who are over 40 to be diagnosed with PTSD and/or another mental health disorder.

Getting help early can prevent PTSD and other problems from becoming chronic. VA is expanding its counseling and mental health services. Easy and fast access to all VA health services—including mental health services—is assured for OEF/OIF veterans.

If you have problems that seem as though they can't be fixed, VA Medical Centers and Vet Centers stand ready to help. Talk to a professional anytime by calling the toll-free National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK and indicate that you are a veteran. You will be connected immediately to VA suicide prevention coordinator and mental health professionals.

Here in the VA New England Healthcare System, we have increased personnel in several mental

health service areas, including PTSD, suicide prevention, homeless outreach, psychosocial rehabilitation, and compensated work therapy. In addition, mental health services are now available at the Network's community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) so care is available to veterans closer to home.

Suicide is the 11th most frequent cause of death in the U.S. Someone dies from suicide every 16 minutes. If you or someone you know is in a crisis, VA is ready to help.

**Get Help Now! 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Help is available 24 hours a day.**

If you notice any of the following behaviors in yourself or a loved one, contact your VA Medical Center, CBOC, Vet Center or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline immediately.

- ★ Talking about wanting to hurt or kill oneself
- ★ Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide
- ★ Rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge
- ★ Acting in a reckless or risky way
- ★ Saying or feeling there's no reason for living

Dr. James Peake Sworn In as Secretary of Veterans Affairs

James Peake, M.D., was unanimously confirmed by the Senate and sworn into office as Secretary of Veterans Affairs on December 20, 2007.

Dr. Peake is the principal advocate for veterans in the U.S. government and directs the nation's second largest Cabinet Department, responsible for a nationwide system of health care services, benefits programs, and national cemeteries for America's veterans and dependents.

A St. Louis, Mo., native, Peake received his Bachelor of Science degree from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Infantry. Following service in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne Division where he was awarded the Silver Star, a Bronze Star with "V" device and the Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster, Peake entered medical school at Cornell University in New York. He was awarded a medical doctorate in 1972.

Peake retired from the Army in 2004 as a Lieutenant General, then served as Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Project Hope, a non-profit international health foundation operating in more than 30 countries. Just prior to his nomination as Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Peake served as a member of the Board of Directors for QTC Management, Inc., one of the largest private providers of government-outsourced occupational health and disability examination services in the nation.



Dr. Peake

Where to find us



VA MEDICAL CENTERS

CONNECTICUT
VA CONNECTICUT
HEALTHCARE SYSTEM
 Newington Campus
 555 Willard Avenue
 Newington, CT 06111
 (860) 666-6951

West Haven Campus
 950 Campbell Avenue
 West Haven, CT 06516
 (203) 932-5711

MAINE
TOGUS VA MEDICAL CENTER
 1 VA Center
 Augusta, ME 04330
 (207) 623-8411
 (877) 421-8263

MASSACHUSETTS
EDITH NOURSE ROGERS
VETERANS MEMORIAL HOSP.
 200 Springs Road
 Bedford, MA 01730
 (781) 275-7500

VA BOSTON
HEALTHCARE SYSTEM
 Brockton Campus
 940 Belmont Street
 Brockton, MA 02301
 (508) 583-4500

Jamaica Plain Campus
 150 S. Huntington Avenue
 Boston, MA 02130
 (617) 232-9500

West Roxbury Campus
 1400 VFW Parkway
 West Roxbury, MA 02132
 (617) 323-7700

NORTHAMPTON VA
MEDICAL CENTER
 421 North Main Street
 Leeds, MA 01053
 (413) 584-4040

NEW HAMPSHIRE
MANCHESTER VA
MEDICAL CENTER
 718 Smyth Road
 Manchester, NH 03104
 (603) 624-4366
 (800) 892-8384

RHODE ISLAND
PROVIDENCE VA
MEDICAL CENTER
 830 Chalkstone Avenue
 Providence, RI 02908
 (401) 273-7100
 (866) 590-2976

VERMONT
WHITE RIVER JUNCTION
VA MEDICAL CENTER
 215 North Main Street
 White River Junction,
 VT 05009
 (802) 295-9363

COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT CLINICS

CONNECTICUT
DANBURY CBOC
 7 Germantown Road
 Danbury, CT 06810
 (203) 798-8422

NEW LONDON CBOC
 4 Shaw's Cove, Suite 101
 New London, CT 06320
 (860) 437-3611

STAMFORD CBOC
 Stamford Health System
 1275 Summer Street
 Stamford, CT 06905
 (203) 325-0649

WATERBURY CBOC
 95 Scovill Street
 Waterbury, CT 06706
 (203) 465-5292

WINDHAM CBOC
 96 Mansfield Street
 Willimantic, CT 06226
 (860) 450-7583

WINSTED CBOC
 115 Spencer Street
 Winsted, CT 06098
 (860) 738-6985

MAINE
BANGOR CBOC
 304 Hancock Street, Suite 3B
 Bangor, ME 04401
 (207) 561-3600

New
LINCOLN OUTREACH CLINIC
(BANGOR SATELLITE CLINIC)
 99 River Road
 Lincoln, ME 04457
 (207) 403-2000

CALAIS CBOC
 50 Union Street
 Calais, ME 04619
 (207) 904-3700

CARIBOU CBOC
 163 Van Buren Road, Suite 6
 Caribou, ME 04736
 (207) 493-3800

RUMFORD CBOC
 431 Franklin Street
 Rumford, ME 04276
 (207) 369-3200

SACO CBOC
 655 Main Street
 Saco, ME 04072
 (207) 294-3100

MASSACHUSETTS
CAUSEWAY STREET CBOC
 251 Causeway Street
 Boston, MA 02114
 (617) 248-1000

DORCHESTER
 895 Blue Hill Avenue
 Dorchester, MA 02121
 (617) 822-7146

FITCHBURG CBOC
 275 Nichols Road
 Fitchburg, MA 01420
 (978) 342-9781

FRAMINGHAM CBOC
 61 Lincoln Street, Suite 112
 Framingham, MA 01702
 (508) 628-0205

GLOUCESTER CBOC
 298 Washington Street
 Gloucester, MA 01930
 (978) 282-0676

GREENFIELD CBOC
 143 Munson Street
 Greenfield, MA 01301
 (413) 773-8428

HAVERHILL CBOC
 108 Merrimack Street
 Haverhill, MA 01830
 (978) 372-5207

HYANNIS CBOC
 145 Falmouth Road
 Hyannis, MA 02601
 (508) 771-3190

LOWELL CBOC
 130 Marshall Road
 Lowell, MA 01852
 (978) 671-9000

LYNN CBOC
 225 Boston Street, Suite 107
 Lynn, MA 01904
 (781) 595-9818

NEW BEDFORD CBOC
 174 Elm Street
 New Bedford, MA 02740
 (508) 994-0217

PITTSFIELD CBOC
 73 Eagle Street
 Pittsfield, MA 01201
 (413) 443-4857

QUINCY CBOC
 114 Whitwell Street
 Quincy, MA 02169
 (617) 376-2010

SPRINGFIELD CBOC
 25 Bond Street
 Springfield, MA 01104
 (413) 731-6000

WORCESTER CBOC
 605 Lincoln Street
 Worcester, MA 01605
 (508) 856-0104

NEW HAMPSHIRE
CONWAY CBOC
 7 Greenwood Avenue
 Conway, NH 03818
 (603) 447-2555

LITTLETON CBOC
 Littleton Regional Hospital
 600 St. Johnsbury Road
 Littleton, NH 03561
 (603) 444-9328

PORTSMOUTH CBOC
 302 Newmarket Street
 Portsmouth, NH 03803
 (603) 624-4366, ext. 5500
 (800) 892-8384, ext. 5500

SOMERSWORTH CBOC
 200 Route 108
 Somersworth, NH 03878
 (603) 624-4366, ext. 5700
 (800) 892-8384, ext. 5700

TILTON CBOC
 NH State Veterans Home
 139 Winter Street
 Tilton, NH 03276
 (603) 624-4366, ext. 5600
 (800) 892-8384, ext. 5600

RHODE ISLAND
MIDDLETOWN CBOC
 One Corporate Place
 Middletown, RI 02842
 (401) 847-6239

VERMONT
BENNINGTON CBOC
 Vermont Veterans Home
 325 North Street
 Bennington, VT 05201
 (802) 447-6913

COLCHESTER CBOC
 162 Hegeman Ave., Unit 100
 Colchester, VT 05446
 (802) 655-1356

RUTLAND CBOC
 215 Stratton Road
 Rutland, VT 05702
 (802) 773-3386

Veterans' Healthy Living

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