

# Veterans' Healthy Living

VA New England Healthcare System

Summer 2008

**Outside Our Walls**

**Home Based Primary Care**

**HBPC Nurses:  
Beyond Routine Medical Care**

**Home Hospice**



**VA Extended Care Programs**

# Message From the Network Director



Michael F. Mayo-Smith  
Network Director

Dear Veterans,

It is my pleasure to begin serving you in the capacity of Network Director of the VA New England Healthcare System (VISN 1). I'm happy to be back in VISN 1, having been the network's

director of primary care from 1999 through 2006. I began my VA career in 1987 serving as the first medical director and home care physician at Manchester VAMC. Since 2006, I was serving VA nationally as chief consultant for primary care.

As I become reacquainted with the health care professionals of VISN 1 and the veterans we serve, I will continue to work toward meeting your changing health care needs and providing you with the highest quality health care available.

In fact, our veterans' changing needs are the focus of this summer issue of *Veterans' Healthy Living*. As the overall age of our veteran population continues to rise and as a younger generation of veterans comes home from the Global War on Terror, VA is finding that, in some cases, treating veterans in the home or in the community is a more effective way to deliver health care over the long term.

Please read on to learn about programs throughout VISN 1 that offer VA health care outside our walls. Expanding these non-institu-

tional programs, such as Home Based Primary Care and Home Hospice, is a priority as we continue to adapt our health care to serve you better.

I look forward to guiding the care and service you receive at our medical centers, community-based outpatient clinics, and in your homes. I wish you and your families a healthy, happy summer.

Michael F. Mayo-Smith, M.D., M.P.H.  
Network Director

## Telephone Service Changes

VA New England is working to improve our telephone services. Changes that are coming include:

⇒ Expansion of the current answering systems to include telephone coverage for all clinics including Primary Care, Mental Health, Specialty Clinics and pharmacy issues. The goal will be to reach a live person to take your call.

⇒ Adding 24 hour telephone service coverage starting in the fall of 2008 to be able to speak to a nurse if you are having an urgent medical problem that cannot wait until the next business day. In addition, you will be able to call and leave a message about the need to cancel or make appointments, or a need to renew your medication or check on refill status.

## Veterans' Healthy Living Editorial Board

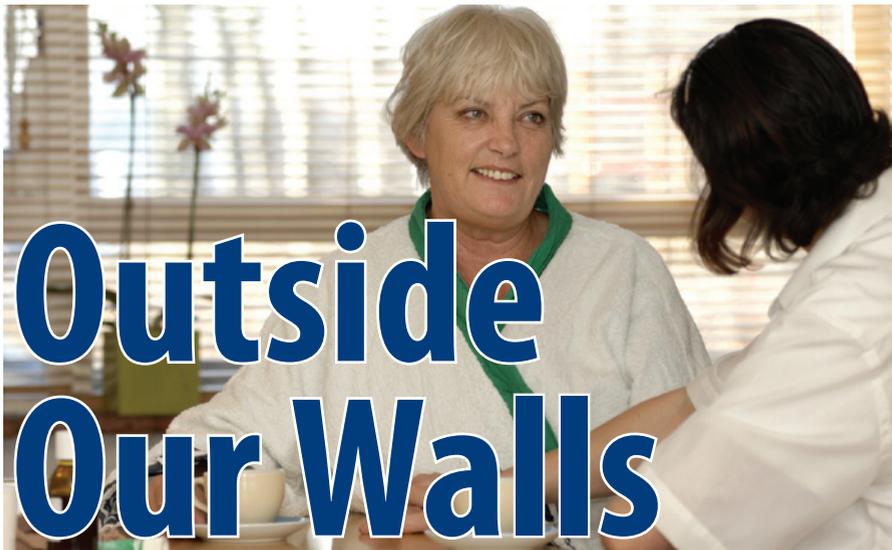
**Executive Editor** | Sandra M. Wunschel, LICSW  
**Associate Editor** | Sally M. Riley

**Contributors:**

Corrine Smith, RN; Jim Hammond, MSW;  
Melissa Thompson, RN; Herschel Collins, RN;  
Luz Vasquez, MD

**Website:** [www.newengland.va.gov](http://www.newengland.va.gov)

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## VA Health Care in the Home, in the Community

**A**s a veteran, you're probably most familiar with VA health care that is provided in the medical center or community-based outpatient clinic that you visit. But those aren't the only places you'll find health services offered by the VA New England Healthcare System. Several programs currently exist that allow veteran patients, in certain circumstances, to receive care in their homes or at facilities in the community. These programs are being expanded to better meet the needs of the aging veteran population and the new generation of servicemen and women now seeking care.

VA health care is a system that manages care for veterans over their lifetime, or long-term. In the past, long-term care primarily referred to services offered in geriatric clinics and nursing homes. However, today's long-term care covers a spectrum of services that includes both institutional care (services received in a medical facility) and non-institutional care (services provided in the home or community). The non-institutional health care options include in-home medical and nursing services, adult day health care, and respite care, as well as hospice and palliative care. As a veteran's health changes over time, these services are available as needed.

Anticipating a growing need for long-term care as the age of the veteran population rises and service members return home from the Global War on Terror, VA is expanding programs that allow veterans to receive health care in home or community settings. "VA is adapting to offer care in the least restrictive setting possible and to support the caregiver as well," says Corrine Smith, RN, director of the Geriatrics and Extended Care Program for VISN 1.

In some cases, VA partners with community professionals to provide the needed non-institutional health services to veterans at home.

*Note: All enrolled veterans are eligible for these non-institutional services if they have been determined to have a clinical need.*

### *Home and Community Programs in VISN 1:*

#### ❖ **Home Based Primary Care (HBPC)**

Primary care provided in the home to veterans with chronic, complex conditions. Routine clinic-based care does not work well for these veterans who are often housebound or bedridden.

#### ❖ **Homemaker/Home Health Aide (H/HHA)**

Personal care services provided in the home to veterans who need assistance with the activities of daily living.

#### ❖ **Home Hospice**

End-of-life and palliative care provided in the home for veterans with chronic and life-limiting illness.

#### ❖ **Adult Day Health Care**

A day program that provides care for veterans and respite relief for caregivers in a community setting.

#### ❖ **Care Coordination/ Home Telehealth (CCHT)**

Health care and case management provided to veterans in their homes through the use of interactive technology.

#### ❖ **Spinal Cord Injury Home Care (SCI HC)**

A special program that provides care in the home to veterans with spinal cord injuries. Available only at the VA Boston Healthcare System.

# Extended Care Programs for Veterans

## Home Based Primary Care (HBPC)

In 2005, Robert, a veteran of the U.S. Navy, was receiving care at the community-based outpatient clinic (CBOC) in Saco, Maine when he ran into some transportation problems. Robert had been diagnosed several years earlier with Type 2 diabetes and diabetic retinopathy, which led to moderate vision loss impacting his ability to drive. He usually relied on rides from others to get to the Saco CBOC. In September of that year, Robert found himself without transportation to the clinic, so he walked, hitching rides when he could—a distance of about forty-five miles. “I remember that my primary care doctor found out I had hiked to the clinic,” recalls Robert. “She said there’d be no more hiking because she was signing me up for the home-based care.”

Contrary to most home health care programs that treat a patient in the home for a short-term condition, VA’s Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) is intended for the veteran for whom routine clinic-based care for a chronic condition has not been effective. Diabetes, congestive heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and general overall frailty are some of the conditions that respond well to home-based



Teams work to promote the maximum level of health and independence for veterans.

patient care, reducing the need for hospitalization, outpatient and emergency room visits, and nursing home placement.

“We see nearly a 60 percent reduction in hospital admissions when veterans are enrolled in the HBPC program,” says Corrine Smith, RN, director, Geriatrics and Extended Care Service Line. “If the patient is admitted, there is an 85 percent reduction in the number of days they are in the hospital.”

All medical centers and some of the CBOCs in the VA New England Healthcare System now offer HBPC. Veteran patients are referred to the program by their

primary care provider.

Once accepted into the program, a health care team, consisting of a primary care physician, a nurse, a nurse practitioner, a dietitian, a physical and/or occupational therapist, a pharmacist and a social worker, cares for the patient. The team works to promote the maximum level of health and independence for the veteran providing for his or her medical, social, and cognitive needs.

In Robert’s case, the HBPC team first addressed his social needs, according to social worker Jim Hammond from the Togus (Maine) VA Medical



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Center. “Robert was homeless with no income. The first thing I did for him was to apply for his pension benefits and begin addressing his housing needs. Within days of my first visit, we began his medical care.” Shortly after this visit, Robert agreed to move into a homeless shelter and eventually, permanent housing was arranged.

Now, at least once a month, the HBPC nurse comes to Robert’s home to draw blood. Every two or three months, he gets a visit from his primary care provider. Since Robert doesn’t drive, home-based care has eliminated the need for him to either find a way to the clinic for an appointment or miss it. “My health has been pretty good,” says Robert. “This is a lot better (for me) than trying to find a way to the clinic.”

## Homemaker/Home Health Aide (H/HHA)

There are times that veterans without chronic illnesses need some assistance at home, too. Elderly and disabled veterans and those with short-term medical conditions sometimes need help with the activities of daily living such as light housekeeping, personal hygiene, or preparing meals. The H/HHA program, available at each of the medical centers in the VA New England Healthcare System, offers personal care and related support services to veterans in these circumstances.

Caregivers of housebound or bedridden veterans may also require help or sometimes a little relief from the emotional and physical stress of giving care. “VA recognizes the needs of the caregiver,” says Corrine Smith, RN. “Supporting the caregiver also helps keep the veteran at home.” If you think you could benefit from H/HHA care, talk to your primary care provider.

# Home Hospice.....

**B**eing at home with family and in familiar surroundings can mean a great deal to veterans with life-limiting illnesses. By partnering with community home hospice agencies, VA's Home Hospice program enables these veterans to remain at home, promoting their comfort, dignity, and quality of life.

According to Melissa Thompson, BSN, CHPN, palliative care coordinator for VISN 1, the Home Hospice program helps patients who are at the end of life. "We are usually involved during the last six months of a veteran's life," says Thompson.

VA also provides palliative care for veterans who have chronic life-limiting illnesses, but whose life expectancy is greater than six months, explains Thompson. "With these patients, we are involved sooner."

In both cases, says Thompson, the focus of the care is on improving and maintaining the patient's quality of life. Typically, this is done by managing the veteran's pain and symptoms so that he or she is more comfortable. Home Hospice provides a full range



of services: nursing, physical therapy, home health aides, social services to help patients get their affairs in order, a chaplain for spiritual comfort,

bereavement counseling for the family, and the accessories needed for care at home, such as a hospital bed. "It may take all these services to keep

*"...the focus of the care is on improving and maintaining the patient's quality of life."*

the veteran at home," says Thompson.

Home Hospice is available through all of the medical centers in the VA New England Healthcare System. Talk to your primary care provider if you'd like to learn more.

## Care Coordination/Home Telehealth and Spinal Cord Injury Home Care

**T**wo other non-institutional VA programs available for veterans are Care Coordination/Home Telehealth and Spinal Cord Injury Home Care.

Care Coordination/Home Telehealth, available at all of the medical centers in VISN 1, is another way VA is striving to deliver health care to veterans in their homes, thus avoiding unnecessary trips to the emergency room or stays in a medical center. Using interactive technology placed in a patient's home, the medical staff is able to monitor the health of the veteran. The results of the program are very positive, especially for veterans with chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, congestive heart failure, and diabetes.

The Spinal Cord Injury Home Care Program, available at the VA Boston Healthcare System, provides health care and support both for patients with spinal cord injuries and for their caregivers.

Increasing the health services for veterans in their homes and communities honors veterans' preferences for care, which helps them keep their ties with family, friends, and spiritual communities. All enrolled veterans are eligible for these services if they have been determined to have a need. It is all part of VA's mission to make available the right care in the right place and at the right time.

# HBPC Nurses: Beyond Routine Medical Care

**H**ome based care nurses typically visit their patients from once a week to once every three weeks to care for their routine medical needs. Frequently the nurses recognize needs that the patients themselves might not have known they have, according to Herschel Collins, RN, a HBPC nurse at the White River Junction VA Medical Center in Vermont.

“Medication management is a big issue with our dementia patients,” says Collins. “One patient insisted he was correctly managing his medications because he’d been doing it for 20 years. I knew from looking in his pillbox that he wasn’t.” Now, Collins and his patient check the pillbox together.

Collins says that nurses are also able to provide services beyond the routine of such duties as checking vital signs and blood sugar levels. Social interaction and patient education are two examples.

For housebound veterans who are isolated because of depression or dementia, nurses can be a source of conversation and stimulus. “I can encourage them to talk about their day and maybe take them for a short walk,” says Collins.

Home care nurses also teach patients about their conditions and ways to take care of themselves. “If we didn’t provide patient education,” says Collins, “these veterans would have to get it by attending classes at the clinics.”



## Adult Day Care

**A**dult Day Health Care is a day program that provides medical care and meaningful activities to veterans either on the VA campus or in a community setting. The services are normally offered on weekdays. Veteran patients can attend as often as needed.



## Like Extended Family

**S**iblings Patty, Ray, and Thomas Brennan were very close having lived together for many years. Thomas, a military veteran like his brother Ray, had complications from a heart condition that made it in his best interests to receive care at home, which he did for many years. Throughout that time, Patty, with the help and support of the Home Based Primary Care team from the West Haven Campus of the VA Connecticut Healthcare System, was his primary caregiver.

When Thomas passed away last summer, the social worker of the team supported Patty and Ray with bereavement counseling, helping them cope with the loss of their brother.

Due to an unfortunate automobile accident, Ray is now receiving care at home, and Patty is once again leaning on the support of the HBPC team from the West Haven VA. “They’ve been coming here so long they’re like extended family,” says Patty. “I know they’re there for me. They have gone above and beyond in their care and compassion.”

# 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

**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**  
186 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

VISN 1 Communications  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
200 Springs Road  
Bedford, MA 01730