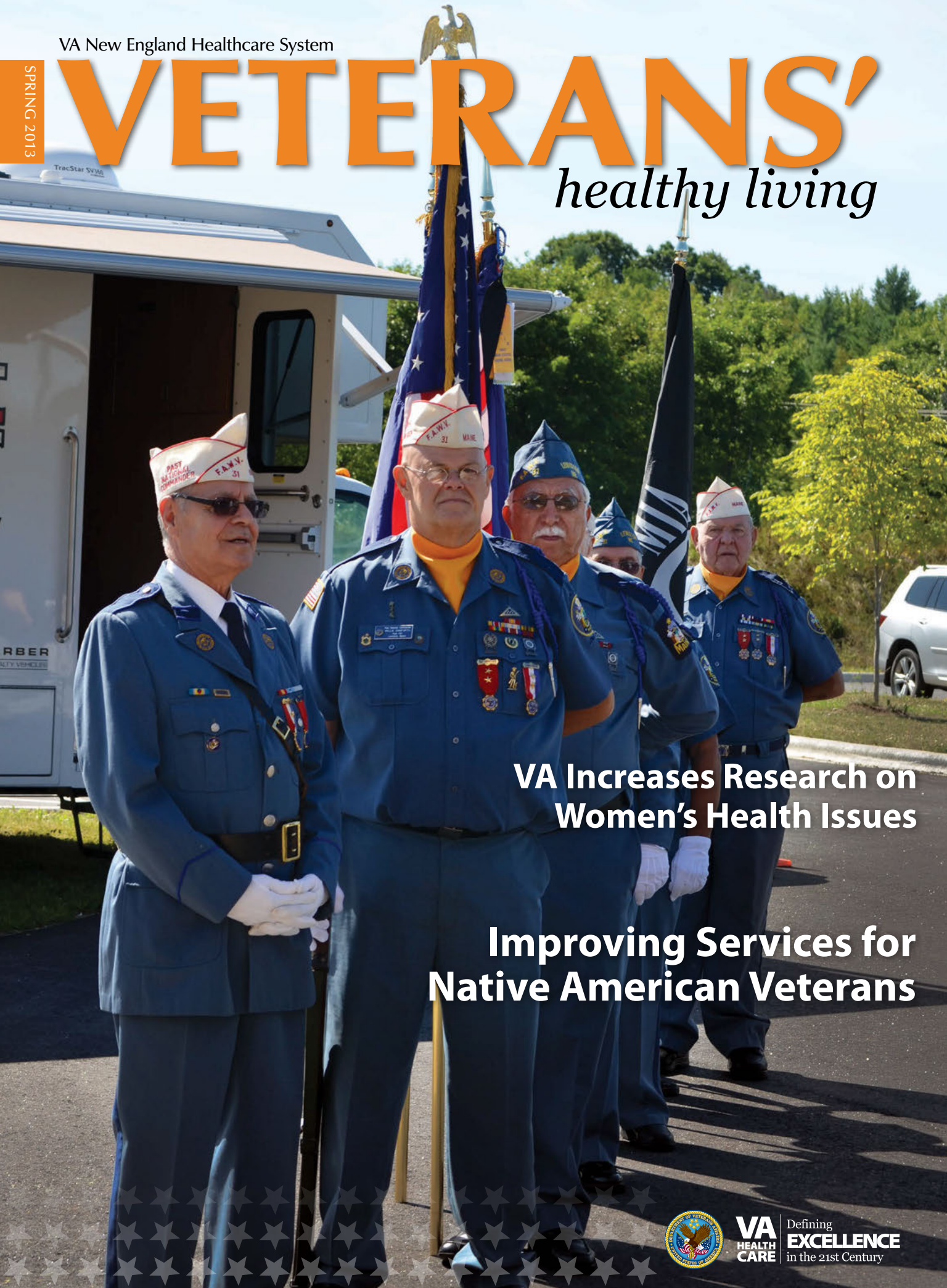


VETERANS'

healthy living



VA Increases Research on Women's Health Issues

Improving Services for Native American Veterans



**VA
HEALTH
CARE**

Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century



Dear Veterans

A Message from the Network Director

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

Spring is a time for growth, change, and sometimes new opportunities. VA has an abundance of opportunities that could meet your changing needs this season. Go online or ask a provider at your closest facility about all the programs and benefits VA has to offer.

On page 3 of this issue of *Veterans' Healthy Living*, you will find the captivating story of how WWII Veteran Alfred "Freddy" Pouliot went from shaking hands with General Eisenhower to being mistaken for a German spy to celebrating armistice with Russian soldiers. After returning home, Mr. Pouliot went on to serve Veterans at the Manchester facility for 33 years. Also on page 3, you will find *Overcoming Misconceptions*, which discusses a few common misconceptions of Veterans who are not enrolled for VA health care services.

On pages 4 and 5, you will read how the VA has established sharing agreements with the Indian Health Services (IHS) of the 10 Native American tribes in VISN 1. The agreements provide reimbursement to IHS for eligible Native American Veterans, which allows for health care closer to home.

With the number of women Veterans rapidly increasing (expected to exceed two million by 2020), VA has expanded research to meet their specific needs. Go to page 6 and read *VA Increases Research on Women's Health Issues* to learn more.

What's new at the White River Junction VAMC, Togus VAMC, Providence VAMC, Manchester VAMC, Bedford VAMC, VA Connecticut Healthcare System, or VA Boston Healthcare System? Check out page 7 and see! You might be interested in the new services, programs, technology, or volunteer opportunities in your area.

Thank you for your service. Now let us serve you!

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

On the Cover:

Color guard prepare to post the colors at the Rutland CBOC ribbon cutting.



Veterans' Healthy Living Editorial Board

Maureen Heard
VISN 1 Chief Communications Officer/
Public Affairs Officer

Kathleen Makela
VISN 1 Public Affairs Specialist

Diane Keefe
VA Boston HCS, Public Affairs Officer

John Paradis
VA CW Massachusetts HCS, Public Affairs Officer

Pamela Redmond
VA Connecticut HCS, Public Affairs Officer

Website: www.newengland.va.gov

Veterans' Healthy Living is published as a patient education service by VA New England Healthcare System. The publication is intended to provide information to help you maintain good health and learn about the many health services available through VA. This publication is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, which should be obtained from your VA health care provider. All articles may be reproduced for educational purposes.





“This reimbursement agreement between the VA and the IHS will help improve health care services for American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans and further the IHS mission and federal responsibility of raising the health status of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level possible.”

Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, director of the Indian Health Service

ensure quality health care would be made available to our Nation’s heroes living in tribal communities,” said Dr. Robert Petzel, Undersecretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration. “This agreement will also strengthen VA, IHS, and tribal health programs by increasing access to high quality care for Native Veterans, particularly those in highly rural areas.”

The agreement has been several years in the making. In 2010, the VA and IHS signed a Memorandum of Understanding to, among other things, increase access to care and coordination of care, and to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and availability

Improving Services for Native American Veterans

All our Veterans deserve access to health care services, and it will soon become easier for Native American Veterans to get those services closer to home.

In December, an agreement was reached between Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Indian Health Service (IHS) that

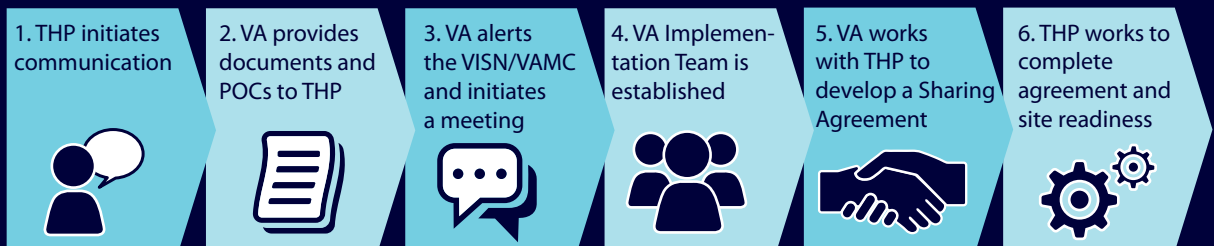
enables VA to reimburse IHS for direct care services provided to eligible American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Veterans.

“The VA and IHS, in consultation with the federally-recognized tribal governments, have worked long and hard to come to an equitable agreement that would

Tribal Health Program (THP) Sharing Agreement Implementation Process

- The THP may reach out to the tribal mailbox or the VAMC directly.
- The VA Implementation Team and THP will work closely to manage these first steps.

Sharing Agreement Process



To learn more about American Indian and Alaska Native Veteran programs, please visit www.va.gov/tribalgovernment and www.ihs.gov

If you have questions about Native American Veteran Affairs, please contact Daniel Mades, Acting Rural Health Program Manager for VISN1, at 781-687-4648.

of services. VA and IHS then began developing the recently signed national agreement, which will be used to shape *sharing agreements* at the local level between VAMCs and Tribal Health Programs (THPs).

Once local tribal health care facilities establish sharing agreements with VAMCs, eligible AI/AN Veterans will receive the following benefits from those tribal facilities:

- The VA will reimburse for direct health services under the same medical benefits package available to all Veterans under 38 CFR § 17.38.
- Eligible AI/AN Veterans can choose to receive their health care from the tribal health care facility and/or VAMC. No pre-authorization will be required for AI/AN Veterans if care is received at the tribal health care facility.
- Tribal Health Programs will be reimbursed when

providing a 30-day supply of outpatient medications to AI/AN Veterans. After the initial 30-day supply, VA will reimburse for prescriptions using the Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy for routine, long-term outpatient medication.

According to Doug Edwards, VISN 1 Rural and Native Veteran Program Manager, there are 10 federally recognized Native American tribes throughout New England: five in Maine, two each in Connecticut and Massachusetts, and one in Rhode Island.

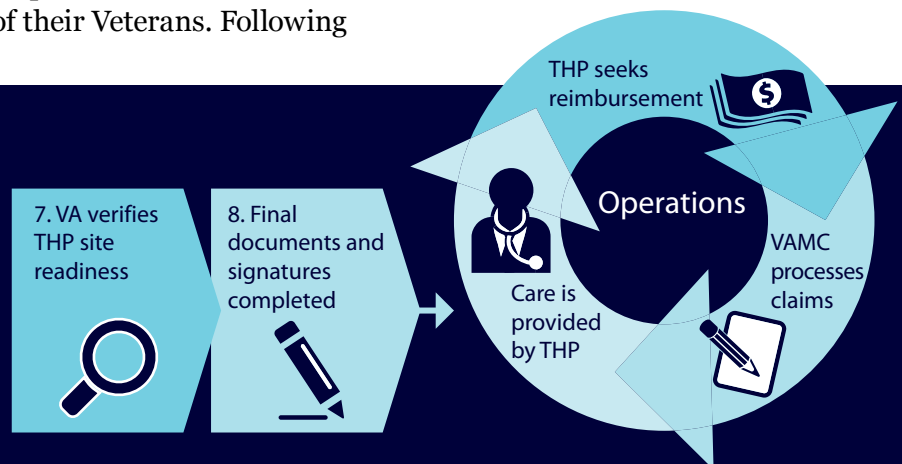
“These sharing agreements will allow Native American Veterans greater access to the health care they have earned through their proud service to our country,” says Edwards. “In my two years as the VISN’s Rural and Native Veteran Program Manager, I’ve come to appreciate the way in which the tribes honor and respect the service and sacrifice of their Veterans. Following

a meeting with the chief of a Connecticut tribe, she took us on a tour of the reservation, which included a visit to a Veterans’ Wall of Honor in their Tribal Chapel where they reverently display the names and pictures of their tribe’s military Veterans. As a Veteran, I noticed that many had served in combat with some of the most elite units of our armed forces. It was a very impressive tribute.”

Edwards is proud of the many facility-level activities in VISN 1 that have occurred in the past, such as pow-wows and other celebrations, workshops and seminars, and a Native American Employment Program. Outreach opportunities for 2013 and beyond include learning more about the Native Veteran culture, building upon existing relationships, and listening to the needs expressed by tribal elders—as well as working toward more sharing agreements.

“Our federal partners at the IHS, with whom I’ve met on several occasions, share VA’s commitment to serving Native American Veterans,” adds Edwards.

- The VA Chief Business Office of Purchased Care and the VAMC review, recommend modifications, and coordinate with the contracting officer and Regional General Counsel for approval.
- At the same time, the THP is working to complete the site readiness criteria.
- Final signatures from the THP, VAMC, and the VA contracting officer complete the process.



VA Increases Research on Women's Health Issues

"We, at VA, must be visionary and agile enough to anticipate and adjust not only to the coming increase in women Veterans, but also to the accompanying complexity and longevity of treatment needs they will bring with them."

*Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary of Veterans Affairs,
July 16, 2011*

March was Women's History Month—but women Veterans deserve the best health care we can provide them all year long for their historic contributions!

One way we do that is by participating in research targeted to the unique needs of this growing segment of the Veteran population, which is expected to exceed two million women by 2020.

In fiscal year 2011, for example, VA funded 60 studies on women's health. One is a five-year study about the needs of female Veterans as they age and will include about 10,000 women Vietnam Veterans. Other VA research has helped provide insight into mental health issues, military sexual trauma, traumatic brain injury, homelessness, smoking, and posttraumatic stress among women Veterans.

In 2012, the VA Central Western Massachusetts, VA Connecticut, and VA Boston Health Care Systems joined other VA centers across the nation in the **Women's Health Research Network**. This group will promote further research into issues like pregnancy, parenting, infant care, exposure to trauma (whether related to combat or military sexual trauma), and patterns of illness for women Veterans versus males. Additionally, VA is examining breast and cervical cancers, the role of hormones in stroke and aging, and neurobiological changes in women who have gone through severe trauma.



While the goal of VA research is to improve health care for women in the military, the findings can benefit all women because VA can follow women's health conditions for periods of 40 or 50 years. Many diseases common among women—such as cancer, osteoporosis, arthritis, and depression—are the focus of studies and clinical trials at numerous VA sites.

Women Veterans have selflessly served our country for decades. We thank them for that and for their ongoing contribution to research on women's health issues.

For real stories women Veterans told as part of the Veterans History Project, visit <http://womenshistorymonth.gov> and look for the link to *The Women of Four Wars*.

