VA New England Healthcare System



VA Increases Research on Women's Health Issues

# Improving Services for Native American Veterans



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.



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Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

# VETERAN SPOTLIGHT: Alfred Pouliot

In 1944, Alfred "Freddy" Pouliot enlisted in the Army. Initially, his plan was to be a gunner, but because he could speak German and French so well, he quickly became an interpreter. "Frenchie" as they called him, was given the task of going face-to-face with German soldiers after conflicts to ask them to surrender.

As part of the 839th battalion, Freddy recalled walking countless miles across snow- and ice-covered fields in Europe. On one occasion, while walking in Germany, his battalion got the opportunity to shake hands with General Eisenhower. As he shook hands with Eisenhower, the General said, "Job well done."

In another field in Germany, Pouliot and the other men were told German spies were close by and they were instructed not to advance, but he went ahead anyway. He wasn't arrested, but our forces took him back to camp thinking he too was a German spy. Pouliot was interrogated for two and a half long hours, but he finally convinced them that he was, in fact, an American.

Pouliot was at the Danube River near the Russian border when the war ended. He said the Americans celebrated the victory with the Russians who were there, and he played an accordion for the first time. He remembered playing songs he knew from home while everyone danced.

Pouliot returned home in 1946 and went to work for the VA as one of the first employees at the facility in Manchester, which was new at the time. He worked as a nurse's aide for many years and then spent 10 years as a housekeeper in the operating room. His VA career spanned a total of 33 years, from 1950–1983. Job well done, Frenchie.

# **Overcoming Misconceptions**

Do you know Veterans who are hesitant about seeking VA services because they feel it may take

away from those

more deserving or in greater need? Do you know former members of

the military who are not seeking VA services simply because they did not see combat and therefore assume they don't qualify?

To address these questions, let us start by defining the term *Veteran*. According to Section 101(2) of title 38, United States Code, for purposes of benefits under laws administered by VA: "The term 'Veteran' means a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released there from under conditions other than dishonorable."

Nowhere in this definition does it state a person must see active combat to qualify for benefits. Cindy Williams, LICSW, CDP, VISN 1 Women Veterans and OEF/OIF/OND Program Manager stated, "If you were in the military and were willing to you put your life on the line, your job was just as important as those on the front line."

Williams has heard Veterans from different eras say they didn't want to take up time or take away from those who may be disabled. But she reiterated that **all** Veterans who served and sacrificed for our country are entitled to and deserve every benefit the VA has to offer.

One Vietnam Veteran who waited to go to the VA for care was Kenneth Purdy. Once he became active in health care treatment, Mr. Purdy learned of other services that were provided to Veterans and said, "I only wish I would have gone to the VA sooner."

Veterans—regardless of gender or age—should know that there *is* a place for them at the VA. "Those that have DD-214 discharge papers need to come in, call an eligibility officer, or inquire online to see if they are eligible for benefits," Williams said.

# **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 "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

# **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.



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.

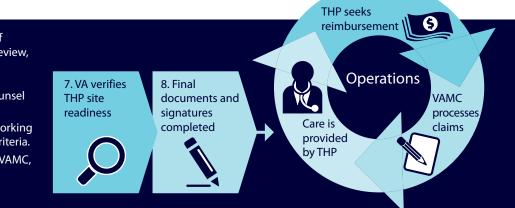
According to Doug Edwards, VISN 1 Rural and Native Veteran Program Manager, there are 10 federally recognized Native American tribes throughout New England: five in Maine, two each in Connecticut and Massachusetts, and one in Rhode Island.

"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 VA New England Healthcare System | Spring 2013

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*.

# VISN 1 NEWS

### **VA Boston Healthcare System**

VA Boston Healthcare System received the national 2012 Award for Excellence in Medication-Use Safety for its Pharmacological **Intervention in Late Life** (PILL) program. PILL involves pharmacy, geriatrics, inpatient teams, and primary care teams; its goal is educating Veterans and their caregivers about medication management when discharged from the hospital. Veterans or caregivers wanting more information on the program or with questions about medication may call 857-364-2036.

# VA Connecticut Healthcare System

VA Connecticut Healthcare System is one of 50 VAMCs in the nation that is an enrollment site for the Million Veteran Program (MVP). MVP is a voluntary research program to help us understand how genes affect Veterans' health and illness. Results from MVP will help improve health care for Veterans and all Americans. The local MVP office is located at our West Haven campus in Building 2, Room 1-206. Visit www. research.va.gov/mvp or call toll-free 1-866-441-6075.

# **Bedford VAMC**

### **Volunteer opportunities**

abound at the Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital. Examples of volunteer assignments include driving a shuttle (golf cart) on hospital grounds, greeting visitors at the Information desk, transferring patients to the chapel for clerical work, transporting Veterans to medical appointments, and more! For information, call 781-687-3076.

# **Manchester VAMC**

There will be a **2K walk** to promote health and benefit homeless Veterans on May 15 from noon to 1:00 at the VAMC in Manchester. For more information, contact the Health Promotion Disease Prevention Program Manager at 603-624-4366, extension 6439.

## **Providence VAMC**

Last November, the Providence VAMC opened its **Homeless PACT** (Patient-Aligned Care Team) **Clinic**, which includes primary care, showers, food, laundry facilities, a clothes pantry, a computer lab, classroom space, benefits assistance, and integrated staffing. To date, over 300 homeless Veterans have enrolled. The new clinic is located in Trailer 37 and is open Monday through Friday.

## **Togus VAMC**

Have you tried the **new check-in kiosks** at the Togus Main Campus and the CBOCs in Caribou, Bangor, Lewiston, Portland, and Saco? VetLink kiosks, which are similar to systems used in airport terminals, let you check in for a scheduled appointment, update your contact and insurance information, view account balances, and print an appointment itinerary slip.

# White River Junction VAMC

White River Junction VAMC in Vermont welcomed new director, Deborah Amdur, in November. Ms. Amdur's experience, which includes more than 18 years with the VA, will be a valuable asset for Veterans. We are **continuing** work on the third floor of our Primary Care Outpatient building, renovating for a new Occupational and Physical Therapy Clinic in building 31, and making room for an imaging center and psychiatric rural residential care center. Veterans will soon be reaping the benefits of these efforts!



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

#### 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

VA Maine Healthcare System 1 VA Center Augusta, ME 04330 (207) 623-8411 (877) 421-8263

#### MASSACHUSETTS

Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hosp. 200 Springs Road Bedford, MA 01730 (781) 687-2000

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

VA Central Western MA Healthcare System 421 North Main Street Leeds, MA 01053 (413) 584-4040

### NEW HAMPSHIRE

Manchester VAMC 718 Smyth Road Manchester, NH 03104 (603) 624-4366 (800) 892-8384

# **RHODE ISLAND**

**Providence VAMC** 830 Chalkstone Avenue Providence, RI 02908 (401) 273-7100 (866) 590-2976

#### VERMONT White River Junction VAMC

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

Willimantic CBOC 1320 Main Street Tyler Square (next to Social Security Office) Willimantic, CT 06226 (860) 450-7583

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

#### MAINE

Bangor CBOC 35 State Hospital Street 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, Ste. 6 Caribou, ME 04736 (207) 493-3800

Fort Kent CBOC Medical Office Building 197 East Main St. Fort Kent, ME 04743 (207) 834-1572 Houlton Outreach Clinic Houlton Regional Hospital 20 Hartford Street Houlton, ME 04730 (877) 421-8263, ext. 2000

Lewiston/Auburn CBOC 15 Challenger Drive Lewiston, ME 04240 (207) 623-8411 Ext. 4601 (877) 421-8263 Ext. 4601

Mobile Medical Unit Main Street Bingham, ME 04920 (866) 961-9263

Portland CBOC 144 Fore Street Portland, ME 04101 (207) 771-3500

**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

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 233 Stevens Street Hyannis, MA 02601 (508) 771-3190

Lowell CBOC 130 Marshall Road Lowell, MA 01852 (978) 671-9000 Lynn CBOC 225 Boston Street, Ste. 107 Lynn, MA 01904

(781) 595-9818 **New Bedford CBOC** 175 Elm Street New Bedford, MA 02740 (508) 994-0217

Pittsfield CBOC 73 Eagle Street Pittsfield, MA 01201 (413) 499-2672

**Plymouth CBOC** 116 Long Pond Road Plymouth, MA 02360 (800) 865-3384

**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 71 Hobbs Street Conway, NH 03818 (603) 624-4366, ext. 3199 (800) 892-8384, ext. 3199

Keene Outpatient Clinic 640 Marlboro Street Keene, NH 03431 (603) 358-4900

Littleton CBOC 658 Meadow Street, Ste. 4 Littleton, NH 03561 (603) 444-1323

Portsmouth CBOC 302 Newmarket Street Portsmouth, NH 03803 (603) 624-4366, ext. 3199 (800) 892-8384, ext. 3199

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#### Somersworth CBOC

200 Route 108 Somersworth, NH 03878 (603) 624-4366, ext. 3199 (800) 892-8384, ext. 3199

**Tilton CBOC** 630 Main Street, Ste. 400 Tilton, NH 03276 (603) 624-4366, ext. 3199 (800) 892-8384, ext. 3199

**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

Brattleboro CBOC 71 GSP Drive Brattleboro, VT 05301 (802) 251-2200

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

#### Newport Outpatient Clinic 1734 Crawford Farm Rd. Newport, VT 05855 (802) 334-9700

**Rutland CBOC** 232 West St. Rutland, VT 05701-2850 (802) 772-2300

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