

VETERANS'

healthy living

VACAA: What You Need to Know

Providing Safe and Effective Pain Care

Veterans and the Law: A Helping Hand



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

I hope you are enjoying a happy and healthy new year so far. As we begin 2015, I'm pleased to tell you about some of the new initiatives going on in VISN 1.

First, please join me in extending a heartfelt welcome to John P. Collins, who was recently appointed director of VA Central Western Massachusetts Healthcare System. On page 3 of this issue, you can read about John's background and his vision for our Veterans.

VA has long been a trendsetter in health care, and our goal to reduce skyrocketing rates of opioid use is no exception. The article on page 4 explains how this change might affect you.

Another positive change for Veterans is the implementation of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA). This legislation, which led to the Veterans Choice Card, ensures timely appointments for Veterans. We summarized the guidelines for you on page 5.

Many returning Veterans struggle as they adjust to life after military service—some even land in the legal system because of crime. We're happy to include an article on page 6 about efforts to help these Veterans get back on track.

Finally, you'll find a piece on page 7 about another terrific way some folks are reaching Veterans—and they're doing it in style!

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

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



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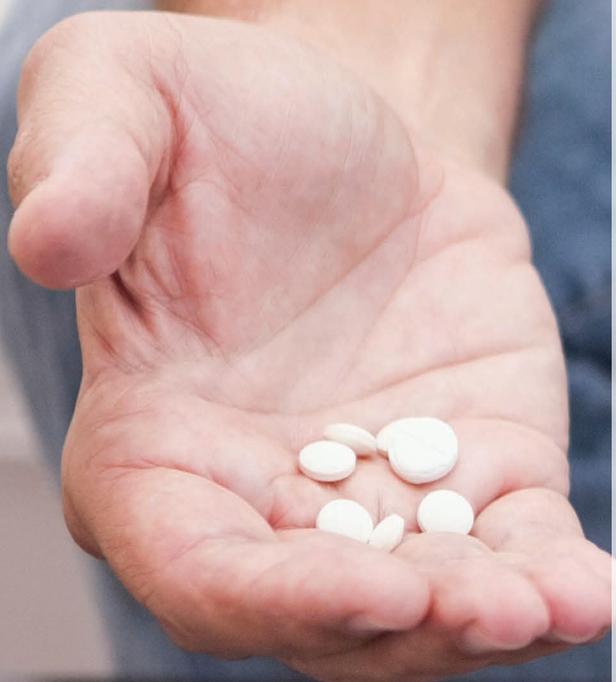
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On the Cover:

In September, thirteen very talented local artists came together to create a mural for Veterans, employees and visitors to enjoy while dining at the VA Central Western Massachusetts Healthcare System canteen. Pictured are artists: Sally Curcio and Sony Crawford.



Providing Safe and Effective Pain Care is a Priority at VA



The total number of opioid-related deaths in the United States (100,000 between 1999 and 2010) far exceeds the number of U.S. military casualties in the Vietnam War (58,000).

Chronic pain affects more than half of all Veterans enrolled in VA health care. It is the most common health problem among Veterans returning from recent conflicts, and older Veterans are now developing age-related health problems like arthritis that are often accompanied by chronic pain. While some Veterans find short-term relief with prescription medications such as opioids (e.g., morphine and oxycodone), these drugs have led to an alarming new trend when taken for longer periods: drug dependency and death.

From 1999–2006, people aged 35–54 years had higher poisoning death rates involving opioid analgesics compared to those in other age groups. In fact, by 2005, the number of deaths nationally exceeded those from both firearms and motor vehicle accidents *combined* in that age group.

Carolyn M. Clancy, MD, Interim Under Secretary for Health, announced in October that VA is implementing a system-wide approach to addressing the risks of long-term opioid use to manage chronic pain. The new approach will include safe prescribing practices, correct medication choices, alternative therapies, and dose reductions.

“We’re finding that many Veterans who have taken pain medications for a long time may be able to manage just as well without them or with lower doses,” she said. “We help Veterans suffering from chronic pain reduce their use of pain medications by getting them personally involved in their own care, educating them about pain management, and supporting them as they try alternative therapies like acupuncture, mindfulness meditation, and yoga.” VA is also funding research to compare opioids with non-opioid alternatives to help clinicians and Veterans make informed choices about the best choice for them.

VA is one of the first health care systems in the country to confront the issue. As Dr. Clancy stated, “We will continue to lead the nation in reducing opioid use and work to achieve our goal of providing safe and effective pain care that improves the lives of all Veterans living with chronic pain.”



Veterans and the Law: *A Helping Hand*

Over 100,000 Veterans live in New Hampshire, and some of them have difficulty adjusting to life when they return home. A few even end up in the court system after committing a crime. Thanks to Veterans' advocates and health care providers, some of those Veterans are now getting appropriate help instead of simply being sent away to "do their time."

The first session of the Veterans Behavioral Health Track program was held in 2014 in Nashua (New Hampshire) District Court, and plans are underway for a similar court for Grafton County, located near Vermont's White River

Junction VAMC. In fact, there are about 160 Veterans' courts nationwide. The first was founded in 2008 in Buffalo, New York, by Judge Robert Russell after he noticed increasing numbers of veterans on the docket of his drug and mental health courts.

Why the need? Many Veterans come home with one or more unique issues that range from depression, substance abuse, nightmares, sleep disorders, and posttraumatic stress disorder. Unless treated, these issues can escalate until Veterans find themselves on the wrong side of the law and facing prison time. So, the new program doesn't offer legal advice to Veterans, but it focuses on intense treatment to help them get back on track and keep them from repeating their crimes.

According to JusticeForVets.org:

One in five Veterans has symptoms of a mental health disorder or cognitive impairment. One in six Veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom suffer from a substance abuse issue. Research continues to draw a link between substance abuse and combat-related mental illness. Left untreated, mental health disorders common among Veterans can directly lead to involvement in the criminal justice system.

The Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Program at the VA Medical Center in Manchester offers similar help to Veterans in trouble and maintains an active caseload of Veterans with pending criminal charges.

Its goal is to ensure that eligible, justice-involved Veterans have timely access to VA services as appropriate. Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists are responsible for direct outreach, assessment, and case management for justice-involved Veterans in local courts and jails, and liaison with local justice system partners.

Also at Manchester is the Health Care for Re-Entry Veterans Program, which helps incarcerated Veterans successfully rejoin the community through supports including those addressing mental health and substance use problems. The Readjustment Counseling Service's Vet Center Programs feature community-based locations and outreach activities that help identify homeless Veterans and match homeless Veterans with necessary services.

To learn more about Veterans Treatment Courts, go to www.justiceforvets.org.

For more information about Veterans Justice Outreach, go to www.va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp.

For a list of Veterans' courts by state, see

www.ncsc.org/Topics/Problem-Solving-Courts/Veterans-Court/State-Links.aspx

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

Martha's Vineyard Hosp.
 One Hospital Road
 Oak Bluffs, MA 02557
 (508) 771-3190

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
 685 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

