

VA New England Healthcare System

SPRING 2019

VETERANS'

healthy living



Reaching out,
changing lives

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



Ryan Lilly, MPA

As we move into a new year, VA New England continues to find innovative ways to support our Veterans and enhance their quality of life through their VA care. But we don't stop there. All Veterans are our focus – not only those that receive care through the VA. All Veterans have earned their VA benefits, and our goal is to reach as many as possible and give them the high-quality care and support they've earned.

Suicide prevention remains a number one goal at the VA. Recent studies indicate that twenty Veterans per day die by suicide. Of those, only six were receiving care at the VA. Veterans who receive their care through the VA are at lower risk of suicide than Veterans who don't. Our goal is to reach as many Veterans as possible and improve those numbers even more. See how VA New England's suicide prevention programs have grown on page 4-5.

In 2018, VA Boston earned the honor of becoming the only VA medical center in New England equipped to perform a life-altering procedure for those suffering from a critical heart issue called aortic stenosis. The new minimally-invasive procedure will improve the quality of life for affected Veterans throughout New England. We are proud of our talented medical teams who made this possible. Read more about the TAVR procedure on page 3.

Finally, people are what truly makes VA New England special. Our staff and the Veterans we serve are like no others. Read recent highlights about our outstanding staff and Veterans on pages 6-7.

With thanks for your service,

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The cardiac team at VA Boston performs a life-altering TAVR procedure on a patient with aortic stenosis.



VA Boston *Life-Changing Heart Procedure for Veterans*

In June of 2018, VA Boston Healthcare System became the only VA facility in New England to offer a new, minimally invasive procedure for treating aortic stenosis, called Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement (TAVR).

The aortic valve is at the top of your heart and it helps to regulate the flow of blood from your heart to the rest of your body. Aortic stenosis is when that valve becomes too narrow to fully open. In that case, the heart can't pump enough blood to the body very well. Someone with aortic stenosis may experience chest pain, fatigue, shortness of breath, irregular heartbeat, leg swelling, and fainting. If left untreated, it can cause heart failure and sudden cardiac death.

Before TAVR, treatment for aortic stenosis meant open heart surgery which is very painful and could take several months to recover from. With TAVR, on the other hand, patients often go home after two to three days and are healed in about 2 weeks. This is because the TAVR procedure is done by inserting tubes through a blood vessel in the leg, leaving only a small puncture wound to heal afterwards.



The VA Boston cardiac team performs a life-changing TAVR procedure.

Both procedures help restore circulation and normal blood flow, reduce symptoms, support healthier heart function, and help people live longer, more productive lives. But the TAVR procedure can be offered to some patients considered too high-risk for surgical complications, such as those with lung or kidney disease. With TAVR, those patients who could not have open-heart surgery now have options.

With their circulation restored, TAVR patients can frequently return to activities they'd given up due to fatigue or shortness of breath. Many describe themselves as more energetic, more alive, and back to their normal selves. With the TAVR procedure, VA Boston puts more life back into Veterans' lives, thanks to the skills and excellence of the VA cardiac catheterization team, cardiac surgery team, heart echocardiogram team, and cardiac anesthesia team.

Expanding Suicide Prevention Outreach

Veterans who receive care through the VA have a reduced suicide risk. According to recent statistics, twenty Veterans die by suicide per day. Of those twenty, an average of fourteen were not receiving care through the VA. VA New England is committed to reaching as many Veterans as possible – both within the VA and in the community – to start the conversation about suicide prevention.



Manchester VA Focuses on Community Outreach

Manchester VA is committed to preventing all Veteran suicide by reaching not only those Veterans receiving care at the VA, but also those higher risk Veterans who don't.

The VA has added an additional suicide prevention coordinator to their Suicide Prevention Program to further the goal of reaching out to the community.

The suicide prevention team already has a large presence in the community and is now also working with local leaders, such as Manchester Mayor Joyce Craig, to collaborate on community outreach.



Leslie Wright, VA Boston Suicide Prevention Coordinator and Navy Veteran and Ambassador Richard (Ricky) Trani discuss suicide prevention.

VA Boston Ambassadors Start the Conversation

Suicide prevention awareness is an ongoing goal at the VA, and VA Boston understands the importance of starting the conversation as soon as possible, before it's too late.

VA Boston's Volunteer Ambassadors greet Veterans and visitors to the medical center, answer questions, provide directions, and escort Veterans to appointments. They are often the first person to interact with Veterans at the medical center. As such, they are uniquely positioned to provide important suicide prevention information and support to the Veterans and visitors they meet.

Leslie Wright, VA Boston Suicide Prevention Coordinator, works with the Volunteer Ambassadors to educate and inform Veterans on suicide prevention.



Mistress Carrie, on-air personality and Veterans' advocate, spoke at a recent Veterans Coffee Social

Local Radio Personality Speaks to Veterans

On January 24, 2019, Veterans in the canteen at the Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital in Bedford enjoyed a meaningful Veterans Coffee Socials program with local radio personality, Mistress Carrie.

Carrie, who describes herself as "... a Harley rider, licensed skydiver, pug owner, Boston Marathon Tough Ruck finisher, amateur marksman, military supporter, Veterans advocate and proud military wife," discussed suicide in the Veteran population and the urgent need to remove the stigma around seeking care for mental health issues, including PTSD.

Mistress Carrie, a well-known advocate for Veterans, has received the commanders Award for Public Service twice. She was the first non-news journalist embedded with the troops in Iraq in 2006 and then again in Afghanistan in 2011. She has been a popular on-air personality at the WAAF 107.3 FM Rock radio station in Boston for nearly 20 years.

Reach Out: Suicide Prevention Resources

Suicide prevention resources are not limited to the healthcare setting. Additional, easily accessible resources can be found where Veterans live:



The Veterans Crisis Line is available 24/7. Dial 1-800-273-8255 and press 1. This resource is for everyone.



Ask for help using **Siri** on an iPhone or **Google Assistant** on an Android phone. Say "Call the Veterans' Crisis Line" and then press 1 to connect.



The **LifeArmor** app has information and tools to assist members of the military with mental health concerns. LifeArmor is available for both iOS and Android devices.



The VA's **Coaching into Care** phone program offers resources to educate and empower families and friends who are seeking care and/or services for a veteran. Call 1-888-823-7458.



Virtual Hope Box app is a mental health support tool that can be personalized with photos, sound, and videos of loved ones to support a Veteran in crisis.

Providers Who Served: *Lieutenant Colonel* *Kate Van Arman, NP*, US Army Retired

Lieutenant Colonel Kate Van Arman, US Army Retired, knew from a young age that she was born to serve. By the age of eight, she knew she was destined to become both a soldier and a healer. Her path led her to the U.S. Military Academy, and later to the University of Vermont with an ROTC nursing scholarship.

She gained valuable education in the Army, becoming Airborne qualified and helping to set up field hospitals to be fully functioning 45 minutes after being dropped from an airplane. She was later trained to be a Critical Care Nurse and a Family Nurse Practitioner. After 20 years in the Army, she felt it was natural to transition to caring for Veterans, a job she describes as “full of daily learning and joy.”

Her experience in primary care has taught her that her 2 most important diagnostic tools are her ears, as more than 80% of a diagnosis is gleaned from a Veteran’s history. And a tape measure, as more than 80% of chronic disease is a result of truncal obesity. As she cares for and educates her patients, she learns about history and life from them in return.



Kate Van Arman, NP, cares for a Veteran patient at the White River Junction VA Medical Center, Vermont

The joy in her day comes from learning her patients’ stories and life lessons, which she treasures. From her oldest patients, typically WW2 Veterans, she learns their secrets for longevity and more: daily movement, moderation with food, plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables (best from home gardens), not so much sweets or alcohol. Recently an Infantry Officer who fought at the Battle of the Bulge, when asked how he made men do something as difficult as charge toward gunfire, responded “You lead them.”

Outside of work, Lieutenant Colonel Van Arman enjoys Vermont Humanities Council and VA sponsored book clubs, and raising her son on their family farm with his grandparents where they grow their own vegetables and enjoy family dinners.

*“Being in VA
Primary Care is
happiness. I come
to work happy,
and leave happy.”*

Army Air Corps Veteran Edward Mack Turns 102



Staff surprised Army Air corps Veteran Edward Mack with a party for his 102nd birthday

Army Air corps Veteran Edward Mack enjoyed a surprise party honoring his 102nd birthday February 7, 2019 at the VA Boston. Mr. Mack served as a machinist in the Army Air Corps, and proudly proclaims he served in the Air Force.

Mr. Mack has been a favorite at the VA for over 15 years. Jessica Tynan, Licensed Practical Nurse, Brockton Primary Care Clinic, VA Boston Healthcare System, has spent a lot of time with him over the years and wanted to give him special recognition. She planned the surprise party, with party hats and cupcakes, to show him how much his friends at the VA care. She says that "Mr. Mack is one of my favorite patients. He has always been very kind, very sweet."

And as Mr. Mack says "You can't beat the care here."

Manchester VA Implements Patient Care Coordination



Andrea Macomber, RN, BS, Nurse Manager, and Kristin Maxwell, Chief of Social Work Services Case Management team

Thanks to a grant received in May 2018, Manchester VA's Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) now have dedicated nurse and social worker case managers to help coordinate care for Veterans within and between VA facilities, as well as with outside facilities.

Case managers work with patients, families, and other professionals to optimize services and resources. They act as advocates for patients, families, and facilities. They also help identify and maximize benefits and services for Veterans, and assist with their long-term healthcare planning.

"Care Coordination is a vital part of a patient's whole care picture," said Andrea Macomber, RN, BS, nurse manager for case management. "When utilized, social and health outcomes for patients are improved."

All Veterans enrolled at the Manchester VA CBOCs are eligible for case management.

VA Connecticut Art Therapy Promotes Wellness



VA Connecticut Healthcare System offers a unique way for Veterans to work through issues related to PTSD, TBI, mental health, and/or substance abuse: art therapy. Led by masters educated therapists, art therapy is about so much more than simply doing a project or an art activity; it's a way to connect with others and oneself to manage stress, build resilience, grow in self-empowerment, rediscover personal strengths, and add meaning and joy to life.

Art therapy is not about artistic skill or technique, but about using creative expression to promote mental, physical, and emotional well-being.

The Creative Arts program through the VA also offers music, drama, and dance/movement therapies. To learn more, contact the Recreation and Creative Arts Therapy at your facility.

VETERANS'

healthy living

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 CBOC
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 CBOC

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
Phillip J. Philbin Federal Bldg.
881 Main Street
Fitchburg, MA 01420
(978) 342-9781

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

Gloucester CBOC
199 Main 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

110 West Squantum St.
Quincy, MA 02171
(774)-826-3070

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

Littleton CBOC

264 Cottage Street
Littleton, NH 03561
(603) 575-6700

Portsmouth CBOC

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

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) 440-3300

Brattleboro CBOC

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

Burlington Lakeside CBOC

128 Lakeside Ave., Ste. 260
Burlington, VT 05041
(802) 657-7000

Newport CBOC

1734 Crawford Farm Rd.
Newport, VT 05855
(802) 624-2400

Rutland CBOC

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

