

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Fact Sheet

September 2017

Progress to Date at Manchester VA Medical Center

Overview

Internal investigations along with media accounts over the last several months revealed issues to address at the Manchester VA Medical Center. Since that time, a number of significant changes have been made or announced – from a system-wide review, recruitment of a new leadership team – to multiple town hall meetings and the creation of a task force. The goal is to make necessary changes to ensure that the Manchester VAMC provides the best care to the New Hampshire Veterans it serves.

Progress of Note

- VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin personally visited the medical center, met with staff and whistleblowers, and took decisive actions including the decision to replace the medical center's leadership. The Secretary's visit was followed by other VA senior leader visits to ensure all issues and concerns are addressed;
- Held more than 12 employee Town Halls and Listening Sessions, led by the new leadership team and acting medical center director including site visits to Community Based Outpatient Clinics statewide;
- Placed a premium on transparency through regular engagements with the acting director and Veterans, Veteran Service Organizations, the New Hampshire Congressional Delegation and media outlets;
- Recruitments are underway for full-time leadership team;
- Hosted a Mental Health Summit with 130 community partners to strengthen community collaboration surrounding mental health;
- Hired additional suicide prevention coordinators;
- Established a first-of-its-kind community partnership with Catholic Medical Center (CMC), allowing Manchester VA providers to use CMC space for endoscopic procedures. Dozens of Veterans received procedures through this model. Partnerships were launched across the state for general surgery, orthopedics, interventional pain and urology;
- The Governor signed an Executive Order and announced partnership that allows VA physicians licensed outside of New Hampshire to practice in community hospitals;
- Conducted a joint recruitment with White River Junction VA for a cardiologist and recruited an academically affiliated cardiologist;
- Restarted nuclear medicine, with cardiac stress tests resuming next month;

- Restructured the Women Veterans Program and appointed a Medical Director, and a new Program Manager;
- Approved recruitment of more than 50 positions;
- Working toward open access for Veterans through Nurse First Integration within Patient Aligned Care Teams;
- Overhauled the office managing the local Veterans Choice Program. It is now a physician-led Office of Community Care more than doubling the staff, and including nurse case; and
- Completed two concurrent investigations – one by the Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection (OAWP), and the other by the Office of Medical Inspector (OMI). OAWP’s investigation centered on potential misconduct. OMI’s investigation is centered on Manchester VAMC’s quality of care. Additionally, OMI is facilitating independent and external clinical reviews of all individual cases where whistleblowers have alleged Veterans received poor care. We expect the reviews to last several more months. Reports expected soon.

Creation of Task Force

Created a task force to conduct a comprehensive review of services provided to New Hampshire’s Veterans.

VA Secretary Shulkin announced the task force during his visit to the Manchester VA on August 4, 2017. The task force will develop a future vision of what VA must do to best meet the needs of New Hampshire’s Veterans. This comprehensive review will include input from Veterans and other key stakeholders and will develop recommendations on how to best configure future VA services in the state.

The task force is made up of multi-disciplinary subject matter experts from the local medical community, Veterans and VA, including a staff member from Manchester VA Medical Center who brought forward concerns to New Hampshire’s Congressional delegation as well as the media.

Task force members named

- Michael Mayo-Smith, MD, MPH, Network Director VISN 1 (Co-Chair)
- David Kinney, NH State Veterans Advisory Committee (Co-Chair)
- Robert Guldner, NH Disabled American Veterans
- Stephen Ahnen MBA, President, NH Hospital Association
- Michael D. McCarten, DO, NH Medical Society
- Eric Funk, MD, Staff Cardiologist, Manchester VAMC
- Edward DeAngelo, MD, Chief of Radiology, Manchester VAMC
- Wanda Hunt, PharmD, President, NAGE Local R1-235, Manchester VAMC
- Susan Mackenzie PhD, Director, Providence RI VAMC
- Craig Coldwell, MD, MPH, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, VISN 1
- Amy Gartley RN, Nurse Executive, VA Maine Healthcare System

- Christine Stuppy, Executive Director, Strategic Planning and Analysis, VHA

The options and recommendations will be reviewed by the [Special Medical Advisory Group](#) (SMAG) with final recommendations being forwarded to Secretary Shulkin by January 2018. The SMAG includes prominent leaders in U.S. health care and their oversight allows VA to include non-VA employees on the task force.

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