

VETERANS' health *matters*

VOLUME 2, 2012

A Healthy Heart Helps You Live a Longer and Happier Life

Dr. James Hastings, cardiologist and director of Pacific Islands Health Care System, counsels Veterans enrolled in Veteran health care in the Hawaiian Islands, Guam, Saipan and American Samoa, which has the 2nd highest incidence of heart disease for U.S. states and territories. Dr. Hastings is in a unique position to help Veterans prevent and treat heart disease. He has had surgery to replace a heart valve, follows a healthy lifestyle to control diabetes and high blood pressure and is also a Veteran. To lower their risk of heart disease and having a heart attack, he advises fellow Veterans to take control of three risk factors.

“Smoking is usually the biggest problem,” says Dr. Hastings. “The good thing about quitting smoking is that the risk for a heart attack begins to drop the first day. And within one year, the risk of heart disease is cut in half.” He advises Veterans to use the many resources provided by the VA to get help to quit.

Cont. on page 6



VA Launches Personalized Health Benefits Handbook

Veterans enrolled in the health care system of the VA have begun to receive personalized booklets that explain their health care benefits and contain other useful information.

“VA is committed to providing our Nation’s Veterans with consistent, clear information about the services available to them,” said Secretary Shinseki.

The new booklet, called a Health Benefits Handbook, will provide a personalized listing of health benefits based on each Veteran’s specific eligibility. The handbook will also have contact information for their local VA medical facilities, appointment scheduling information, guidelines for communicating with their clinical team and, as applicable, information about copays.

Distribution of the handbooks began February 2012 with all 8.5 million Veterans enrolled in VA’s health care system scheduled to receive their handbooks by 2013. Veterans will receive updates to their handbook to reflect changes to their benefits or eligibility.

For more information about the Health Benefits Handbook, visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhbh or call VA’s toll-free number at 1-877-222-VETS (8387).

VA Participates in Settlement with Mortgage Banks

Secretary Announces Protections for Veterans

The VA announced its participation in the largest state-federal legal settlement in history that deals with problems within the mortgage industry. VA joined with the Department of Justice, a coalition of state attorneys general and other federal agencies in the settlement.

The nation’s five largest mortgage servicers have agreed to this landmark \$25 billion settlement that addresses past mortgage loan servicing and foreclosure abuses, provides substantial financial relief to borrowers, and establishes significant new homeowner protections in the future.

In addition to cash payments to avoid litigation, the banks also agree to undertake other activities, such as principal forgiveness, interest-rate-reduction refinancing, and forbearance during unemployment.

To get help, Veterans and Servicemembers – even those without a VA guaranteed loan – may call a national toll-free number, 1-877-827-3702 to speak with VA loan specialists who will provide information about the process of obtaining a VA-guaranteed home loan, or assistance in retaining their home loan or avoiding foreclosure. Information about the VA Home Loan Guaranty program is also available online at www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans.



VA Caregivers Support Line Celebrates First Anniversary

Program Received More Than 25,000 Calls in First Year

On Feb. 1, the VA marked the one-year anniversary of the toll-free National VA Caregiver Support Line, 1-855-260-3274. The support line's dedicated staff has helped more than 25,000 Veterans, family members and caregivers connect to resources and receive access to services they have earned.

"VA recognizes the importance of caregivers to our Veterans' health and well being. We also recognize the sacrifices the daily care of their beloved Veteran requires," said Secretary Shinseki. "It is the care and commitment of caregivers that allows Veterans with chronic illnesses or severe injuries to remain in the homes they defended, surrounded by the loved ones they hold dear. I am proud we have been able to help so many caregivers in this first year of the support line's operation." Callers to the support line are spouses, children, other family members and friends of Veterans as well as Veterans themselves.

The support line responders can connect callers to VA's other support lines such as the VA Veteran Crisis Line and Coaching Into Care Line when these lines better meet the callers' needs.

VA also features a Web page, www.caregiver.va.gov, with general information on other caregiver support programs available through VA and the community.

Caregiver Support Line responders listen to the callers and assess how best to offer support, appropriate direction and connection to needed resources.

VA Grant Supports Improvement at California Veterans' Facility

Home in Yountville to Receive \$1 Million in VA Funding

To ensure California's State Veterans' Home in Yountville remains a comfortable and safe residence for Veterans, the VA is awarding a grant to the state of more than \$1 million for a new fire alarm system.

"Our federal-state partnership helps to provide comfortable and safe housing in a caring community for California Veterans who have served their country," said Secretary Shinseki.

VA's grant will cover approximately 65 percent of the estimated \$1.6 million cost of the project.

In fiscal year 2010, VA spent more than \$9 billion to serve California's nearly two million Veterans. VA operates 10 major medical centers in the state, with outpatient clinics and Vet Centers across the state, plus nine national cemeteries.

California operates six state Veterans' homes and is planning two more.



VA FACILITY HIGHLIGHTS

SAN FRANCISCO VA MEDICAL CENTER



In an effort to improve parking congestion, the San Francisco VA Medical Center has a new free valet parking service located in front of the new patient parking garage (Bldg. 212). This service is in use from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday (except federal holidays). After 5:30 p.m., vehicles are moved outside of the parking garage to Parking Lot B. Keys need to be picked up from the medical center's police office located on the ground floor in Bldg. 203. To ensure that only patients use this service, the attendant may ask to see the Veteran patient's identification card.

The medical center also partners with Bauer's Transportation to provide free shuttle and bus service between the medical center and major transportation hubs in the city. This service runs about every 20 minutes from 5-9 a.m. and 2:30-6:30 p.m. Find out more about this from www.sanfrancisco.va.gov/patients/bauers.asp.

Construction on another parking structure, which will add about 300 new parking spaces, is scheduled to begin by the end of the year.

VA PACIFIC ISLANDS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

New Task Force Seeks to Improve the Care of Women Vets

"The newly formed Hawaii Women Veterans Task Force will go a long way in addressing the needs of women Veterans," said Ron P. Han, Jr., director of the Hawaii Office of Veterans' Services.

The task force includes 14 women Veterans from the local community and neighboring islands and National Guard and active duty Servicemembers. The women represent all eras, services and professions.

According to Air Force 1st Lt. Kathleen "Kat" Eisenbrey, recently elected task force chair, "The mission of the task force will enable advocacy for women Veterans locally. The members of the task force look forward to making a difference in the lives of fellow women Veterans."

Other task force members are Veteran Ann Freed, co-chair of the Women's Coalition and Master Sgt. Roxanne "Rocky" Bruhn, task force vice chair. Sgt. Bruhn has served 28 years with the Hawaii Air National Guard in the 154th Wing at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam and was its first female aerospace ground equipment mechanic.

Progress made on the task force's development of comprehensive programs and services to address unique needs and issues is due to the Hawaii Senate in January 2013.

VA PALO ALTO HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

New Surgical Pre-Op Allows Family Members



The "DO NOT ENTER - Authorized Personnel Only" sign no longer exists in the health care system's pre-operation holding area. In an effort to be more Veteran and family-centered, staff and Veterans advocated letting families stay with their loved ones until they were wheeled off to surgery.

A team of nurses envisioned an area that welcomed families to wait with their loved ones as they were prepared for surgery. In the fall of 2011, the nurses proposed their idea to the Veteran and Family Advisory Council, a group made up of Veterans and family members who provide VA staff with their unique patient and family perspective. Advisory Council members embraced the idea and made sure to define "family" as the Veteran defines it – to include family members, friends, clergy, significant other or social worker.

"I love being able to be with my wife. Last time, I waited in the waiting room and it was awful," said the husband of a Veteran.

There is less anxiety overall as families send off their Veterans into surgery, with a better understanding of the procedure and expected results.

VA CENTRAL CALIFORNIA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Director Al Perry Retires

After an illustrious 40 year federal career, VA Central California Director Al Perry retired on April 3, 2012. Al Perry was appointed Director of VA Central California in 1998. He served as a Medical Service Corps Officer in the U.S. Army from 1971-1973, then at eight other VA Medical Centers. Perry was recognized nationally for leadership by the Office of the President of the United States and the American College of Healthcare Executives. He served as Chair, Local Federal Coordinating Committee of United Way Campaign and Fresno Madera Hospital Association.



Congressman Jim Costa and Al Perry

VA Central California Health Care System Associate Director Susan Shyshka was appointed Acting Director, effective April 4, 2012. Ms. Shyshka has worked for the VA since 1984. She holds a master's degree in Library Science. In 1991 she was appointed Assistant Chief of Library and Medical Records at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System. She assumed the role of Associate Director at VA Central California Health Care System in 2001. Ms. Shyshka is a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives and a Certified Healthcare Executive. She also served as Chair, Local Federal Coordinating Committee of the Fresno County United Way.

VA SIERRA NEVADA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Read Food Labels to Help Choose Healthy and “SuperFoods”

Every time I turned around I was hearing about “superfoods.” To find out what that meant, I asked Kate Ault, registered dietitian for the VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System in Reno.

Kate patiently explained that there are some vital nutrients that our bodies cannot make and that we need to get them from food. The main ones are fiber, vitamin C, iron, vitamin D and calcium. A “superfood,” said Kate “must exceed 20 percent of the Daily Value (DV) in at least two of these five vital nutrients.” For example, five to six pieces of broccoli exceeds the 20 percent DV for both fiber and calcium.

The Nutrition Facts section on food labels provides Daily Value percentages. Knowing the nutritional value of anything you eat goes a long way towards choosing healthy foods and proper serving sizes. So does a Web site, www.calorieking.com that Kate recommended.

Kate claimed that you don't have to be a stickler with food all the time. You just need to be aware of portion sizes in relation to your nutritional needs.



VA NORTHERN CALIFORNIA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Awareness is Raised for Women's Heart Disease

In February, Women's Heart Health month, the Cardiology Department at Sacramento Medical Center was busy raising awareness about the prevalence of heart disease in women over the age of 55. Around this age, a woman's estrogen levels drop, which significantly increases the risk of heart disease.

According to Cardiology Clinic Manager, Curtis Jones, heart disease is the number one killer of women, a fact that is often overlooked. Often, women can have symptoms that don't first appear to be related to a heart attack. Jones recalls a 62 year old female Veteran who developed sudden, profound fatigue, as well as aching in both of her upper arms. Maybe because women seem to tolerate pain better than many men, she casually called for an appointment after putting on her make-up and ironing a blouse. She never developed acute chest pain but became more short of breath and fatigued. When hooked up to an EKG, it was clear that she was having an acute heart attack.

The Cardiology Department and primary care doctors at Northern California Health Care System provide information and resources to women Veterans to make heart disease prevention a priority for them.

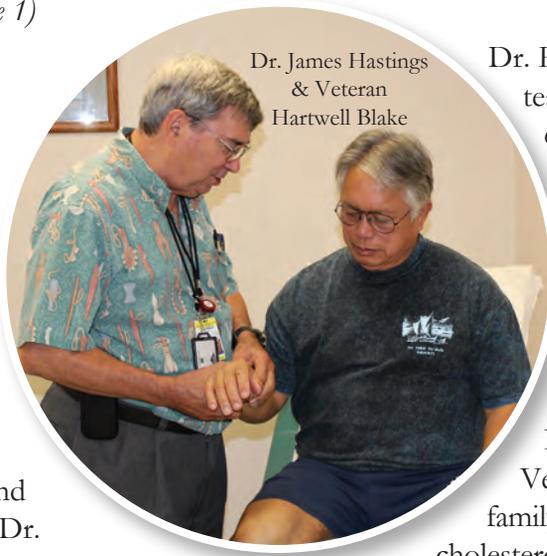
A HEALTHY HEART HELPS YOU LIVE A LONGER AND HAPPIER LIFE

(Cont. from page 1)

High blood pressure is another controllable risk factor. “Many Veterans wrongfully think that high blood pressure is about stress and anxiety,” said Dr.

Hastings. “It is actually a physiological problem that makes your arteries age faster.” He tells Veterans, “Don’t get excited about it, just treat it. A lot of good medicines can do this.” Losing weight, limiting salt and exercising also help control blood pressure.

A third main risk factor is lack of physical activity. “You don’t have to be a marathon runner,” said Dr. Hastings, “Just walk.” He has Veterans start with walking 5,000 steps a day; then 10,000 steps a day; and then an hour a day. His goal is to get Veterans to walk a mile in 20 minutes if they can. “Walking helps Veterans lower their risk of a heart attack because it helps them lose weight and conditions the vascular system. And if they do have a heart attack,” said Dr. Hastings, “It is likely to be a smaller one and not give them as many problems. And it helps you feel better!”



Dr. James Hastings
& Veteran
Hartwell Blake

Dr. Hastings advises fellow Veterans to see their health care team right away if they notice any new symptom. An example is any new pain in the chest, arm, or shoulder. “It could also be jaw, arm, or shoulder pain that lasts several minutes and may go away, but occurs for no obvious reason. You may also notice that you are starting to get short of breath when you exercise on a treadmill and that this occurs the next time you use the treadmill,” he said.

Important, too, according to Dr. Hastings, is for Veterans to be involved in their health care – to know their family history of heart disease, their blood pressure and blood cholesterol numbers and to discuss these and other risk factors, such as diabetes with their health care team. Dr. Hastings concluded, “Finding a problem early and treating it can significantly lower the risk of having a heart attack and help a person lead a fruitful and happier life!”

Heart Attack Warning Signs in Men and Women

- Uncomfortable pressure, fullness, squeezing, or pain anywhere in the chest that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back
- Chest pain that spreads to the shoulder, neck, lower jaw, one or both arms, back or stomach
- Atypical chest, abdominal or stomach pain
- Chest discomfort with fainting, feeling lightheaded, shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting or sweating
- Gray-colored or clammy skin
- Jaw or arm pain without chest pain



In women, common warning signs can also include:

- Heavy fullness or pressure-like chest pain between the breasts that spreads to the left arm, shoulder or throat
- Shortness of breath without chest pain
- An uneasy feeling in the chest with any problem listed above or any of these problems:
 - Pain in the lower part of the chest
 - Fluttering or rapid heartbeats
 - Unusual fatigue or weakness
 - Unexplained or extreme anxiety



NO LIE – A-FIB CAN CAUSE STROKE

Atrial fibrillation (also called “AF” and “A-Fib”) is an abnormal rhythm of the heart. It is quite common and affects 2.3 million adults in the U.S. Many factors can cause A-Fib. These include aging of the heart, high blood pressure, leaky heart valves, or coronary artery disease. Extreme stress, excess caffeine or alcohol, sleep apnea and obesity are some triggers for A-Fib.

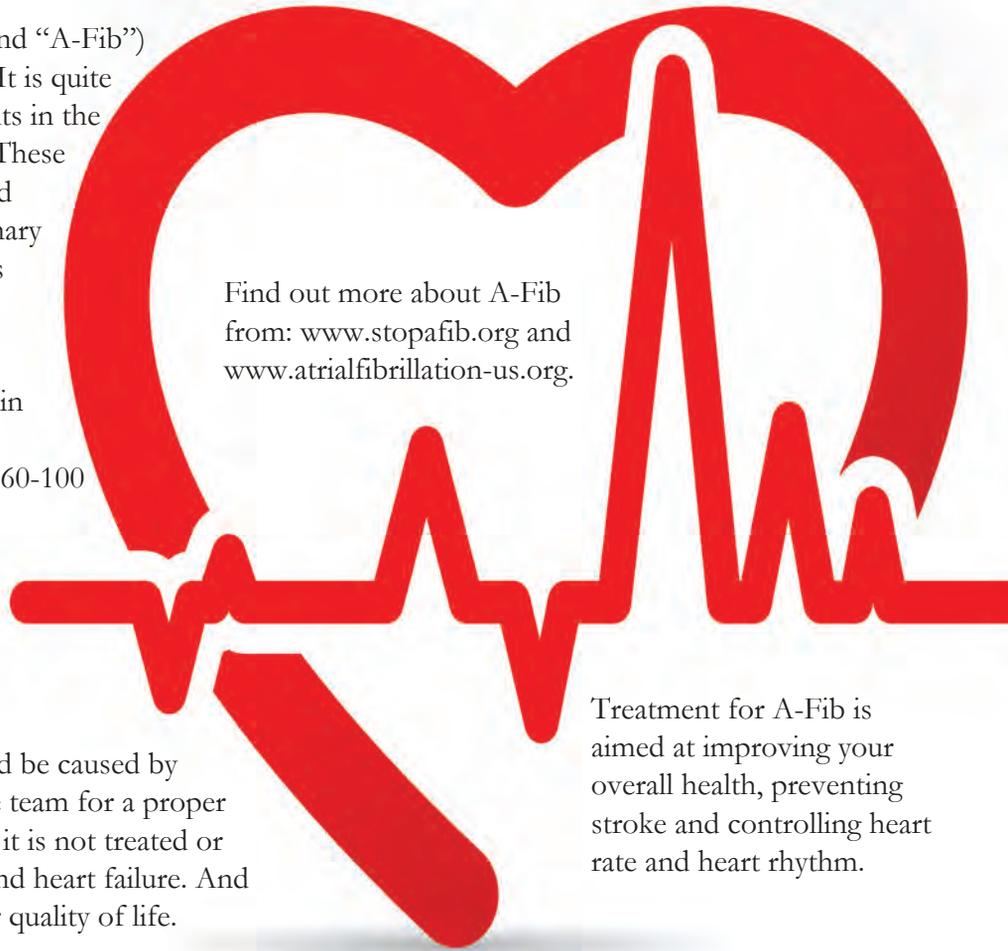
Some people can feel when they are in A-Fib. Symptoms include:

- Rapid heart rate. (Normal pulse is 60-100 beats per minute at rest.)
- Palpitations or irregular heart beat
- Lightheadedness
- Shortness of breath
- Mild chest discomfort or pain
- Lack of energy or fatigue

These symptoms are vague and could be caused by other problems. See your health care team for a proper diagnosis and your risk for A-Fib. If it is not treated or controlled, A-Fib can cause stroke and heart failure. And having A-Fib can interfere with your quality of life.

Find out more about A-Fib from: www.stopafib.org and www.atrialfibrillation-us.org.

Treatment for A-Fib is aimed at improving your overall health, preventing stroke and controlling heart rate and heart rhythm.



WORD SEARCH

- AEROBIC
- ARTERIES
- ATHEROSCLEROSIS
- BLOOD PRESSURE
- DIABETES
- HEART ATTACK
- LIPIDS
- PLAQUE
- RISK FACTORS
- SCREENING
- SIGN
- STOP TOBACCO
- STRESS
- TRANS FATS
- WALK

O C C A B O T P O T S G E K S
 G N I N E E R C S E C S U H T
 P L S E T E B A I D D U Q U A
 N Q X F S D C R L I K W A Y F
 G E R U S S E R P D O O L B S
 I W L Z E T K I Q U A L P W N
 S I S O R E L C S O R E H T A
 S K C A T T A T R A E H N I R
 E N T L S V W C I B O R E A T
 C H Y S R O T C A F K S I R Y

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PRESORTED
STANDARD
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VETERANS AFFAIRS
PERMIT NO. G-75

Where to find us! * OPC = Outpatient Clinic

VA Central California Health Care System

VA Central California Health Care System

2615 E. Clinton Avenue
Fresno, CA 93703-2286
(559) 225-6100

VA South Valley OPC

1050 North Cherry Street
Tulare, CA 93274
(559) 684-8703

NEW Merced OPC

340 E. Yosemite Avenue
Merced, CA 95340
(209) 381-0105

NEW VA Oakhurst CBOC

40597 Westlake Drive
Oakhurst, CA 93644
(559) 683-5300

VA Northern California Health Care System

VA Sacramento Medical Center

10535 Hospital Way
Mather, CA 95655
(916) 843-7000

VA Martinez OPC

150 Muir Road
Martinez, CA 94553
(925) 372-2000

VA Redding OPC

351 Hartnell Avenue
Redding, CA 95926
(530) 226-7555

VA McClellan OPC

5342 Dudley Blvd.
McClellan Park, CA 95652
(916) 561-7400

VA Mare Island OPC

201 Walnut Ave.
Mare Island, CA 94592
(707) 562-8200

Oakland Behavioral Health Clinic

525 21st Street
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 587-3400

VA Oakland OPC

2221 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 267-7800

VA Fairfield OPC

103 Bodin Circle, BLDG. 778
Travis AFB, CA 94535
(707) 437-1800

VA Chico OPC

280 Cohasset Road
Chico, CA 95926
(530) 879-5000

VA Yreka Rural Clinic

101 E. Oberlin Road
Yreka, CA 96097
(530) 841-8500

Yuba City Outreach Clinic

425 Plumas Street
Yuba City, CA 95991
(530) 751-4500

VA Palo Alto Health Care System

VA Palo Alto Division

3801 Miranda Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94304-1290
(650) 493-5000

VA Menlo Park Division

795 Willow Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
(650) 493-5000

VA Livermore Division

4951 Arroyo Road
Livermore, CA 94550
(925) 373-4700

VA Capitola OPC

1350 N. 41st Street Suite 102
Capitola, CA 95010
(831) 464-5519

VA Stockton OPC

500 W Hospital Road
Stockton, CA 95231
(209) 946-3400

VA Modesto OPC

1524 McHenry Ave. Suite 315
Modesto, CA 95350
(209) 557-6200

VA Monterey OPC

3401 Engineer Lane
Seaside, CA 93955
(831) 883-3800

VA San Jose OPC

80 Great Oaks Boulevard
San Jose, CA 95119
(408) 363-3011

VA Sonora OPC

13663 Mono Way
Sonora, CA 95370
(209) 588-2600

VA Fremont OPC

39199 Liberty Street
Fremont, CA 94538
(510) 791-4001

San Francisco VA Medical Center

4150 Clement Street
San Francisco, CA 94121
(415) 221-4810

Downtown S.F. VA OPC

401 3rd Street
San Francisco, CA 94107
(415) 281-5100

VA Eureka OPC

714 F Street
Eureka, CA 95501
(707) 442-5335

VA San Bruno OPC

1001 Sneath Lane
San Bruno, CA 94066
(650) 615-6000

VA Santa Rosa OPC

3841 Brickway Blvd.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
(707) 569-2300

VA Ukiah OPC

630 Kings Court
Ukiah, CA 95482
(707) 468-7700

Clearlake VA Clinic

15145 Lakeshore Drive
Clearlake, CA 95422
(707) 995-7200

VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System

Ioannis A. Lougaris VAMC

975 Kirman Ave.
Reno, NV 89502
(775) 786-7200

VA Lahontan Valley OPC

345 West A Street
Fallon, NV 89406
(775) 428-6161

VA Sierra Foothills OPC

11985 Heritage Oak Place
Suite #1
Auburn, CA 95603
(530) 889-0872

VA Carson Valley OPC

925 Ironwood Drive, Suite 2102
Minden, NV 89423
(775) 786-7200 Ext. 4000

NEW VA Diamond View OPC

110 Bella Way
Susanville, CA 96130
(530) 251-4550

NEW Winnemucca Rural Outreach Clinic

Army 735 4th Street
Winnemucca, NV 89445
(877) 320-4990

VA Pacific Islands Health Care System

Spark M. Matsunaga VA Medical Center

459 Patterson Road
Honolulu, HI 96819
(808) 433-0600

VA PTSD Residential Rehabilitation Program

459 Patterson Road
Honolulu, HI 96819
(808) 433-0004

VA Maui OPC

203 Ho'ohanna Street, Suite 303
Kahului, HI 96732
(808) 871-2454

VA Hilo OPC

1285 Waianuenue Ave., Suite 211
Hilo, HI 96720
(808) 935-3781

VA Kona OPC

75-377 Hualalai Road
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740
(808) 329-0774

VA Kauai OPC

4485 Pahe'e Street, Suite 150
Lihue, HI 96766
(808) 246-0497

VA Guam CBOC

498 Chalan Palasyo
Agana Heights, Guam 96910
(671) 475-5760

VA American Samoa OPC

Fitele Teo Army Reserve Building
Pago Pago, American Samoa
96799
(684) 699-3730

VA Lanai Outreach Clinic

628-B Seventh Street
Lanai City, HI 96763
(808) 565-6423

NEW VA Saipan OPC

Marina Heights Business Park
P.O. Box 500938
Saipan, MP 96950
(670) 323-9000

Manila VA Regional Office & Outpatient Clinic Manila, Philippines

NEW Manila OPC

Seafont Compound
1501 Roxas Boulevard
1302 Pasay City, Philippines
(011) 632-318-8387