

Veterans' health matters

My HealthVet: Your Key to Better Health Care

My HealthVet is VA's award-winning online Personal Health Record. It offers veterans anywhere, any time, Internet access to VA health care. The mission of My HealthVet is to improve health care for all veterans by providing one-stop online access to better manage health, make informed health decisions, and store important health and military history information.

You can register online at www.myhealth.va.gov and become an active partner in your health care. My HealthVet gives you access to:

- VA prescriptions and refills
- Information related to VA Benefits and Services
- Trusted Health Information
- Healthy Living Centers

The Personal Health Journals (see article on p. 7) give you a place to record your health information, including blood pressures, weights, blood sugars, military health history, and activity and food journals. You can print this information and bring it to your provider if needed.

How to Register

Type www.myhealth.va.gov in the address bar on your web browser, and then press Enter. This takes you to VA's My HealthVet website. When there, click

the Register Today button. Complete the Registration Page, review and accept the Terms & Conditions and the Privacy Policy for using the My HealthVet website.

New Features

Healthy Sleep Center: Having trouble sleeping is a common problem. The new Healthy Sleep Center on My HealthVet offers information to help you understand sleep's role in living a healthy lifestyle. Helpful tips, information, new skills, and behaviors that could improve your sleep habits are available in this Center. The information encourages healthy living by helping you adopt healthier behaviors that can last a lifetime!

You can access the new Healthy Sleep Center by logging into My HealthVet, going to Research Health, to Healthy Living Centers, then clicking on the Healthy Sleep Center. It's easy, free, full of useful ideas, and may be just the help you're looking for to get a good night's sleep.

Patient Education: To kick off our new patient education Learning Center on My HealthVet, we have added three on-line courses:

- Managing Your Triggers
- Succeed at Work
- Managing Your Stress

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Expecting Recovery

By Troy H. Seidl, Ph.D., M.Ed.

Recovery is the concept that people can and do overcome challenges in life. Many of our veterans face daily physical, emotional, and mental health challenges. It is VA's job to provide the most recovery-oriented care that is available. We do this by coordinating recovery across all services in our hospitals and clinics.

A local Recovery Coordinator is housed in each facility, with the sole purpose of promoting awareness about recovery and the elements that make up recovery. For example, in Hawaii,

the Pacific Islands Health Care System provides weekly recovery classes for veterans to discuss their own issues of recovery.

The Sierra Nevada Health Care System has a recovery component in each mental health program. For example, the Addictive Disorders Treatment Program uses the 10 Elements of Recovery in its newly designed curriculum.

In addition to these examples, each facility in our network has an Integrated Care Team, where mental health needs are addressed in the Primary Care setting, giving counselors and physicians the opportunity to

work closely together to develop a more comprehensive treatment plan for veterans. This ensures that veterans aren't handed off from one professional to another without discussing their needs.

The ways in which we can promote recovery are endless. The 10 Elements of Recovery are: Strengths-Based, Holistic, Non-Linear, Peer Support, Hope, Empowerment, Individualized, Self-Directed, Respect, and Responsibility. As we continue on this path of recovery-oriented care for our veterans, we should always remember the elements and be committed to them. ■

Patient Surveys: Your Feedback Is Important

As regularly reported in both national and local media, the VA ranks much higher in quality health care and customer service than most other major health care systems. One way we do that is by regularly gathering – and paying close attention to – your feedback on how well we've met your needs.

Because we hold ourselves to a higher level of performance, we regularly survey our patients to assess their perceptions of care through tools such as the Survey of Healthcare Experiences of Patients (SHEP). Nationally, about 600,000 of these surveys are sent to our veteran patients each year, with response rates in excess of

70 percent. The SHEP survey assesses VA's quality of care and helps us to better understand patient expectations and needs.

One of the ways you can help is by cancelling your appointment at least 24 hours in advance, if you're unable to keep it. This will allow us to move waiting patients into those available appointment times, and decrease overall waiting time for all patients.

After your visit or inpatient stay, you may receive a confidential SHEP questionnaire in the mail, asking you about your most recent outpatient or inpatient treatment at one of our VISN 21 medical facilities. Please take a few minutes to complete it and return it to us.



Your feedback and comments help us to affirm our staff when they provide very good or excellent care and service, and also help us identify the need for improvements. If you have a concern or problem, we want to know about it. It makes a difference for you and for your fellow veterans. If we did well, please let us know. ■

VA National News

Enhanced VA Mortgage Options Now Available

Veterans with conventional home loans have new options for refinancing a VA guaranteed home loan. These new options are available as a result of the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2008, which the President signed October 10, 2008.

"These changes will allow VA to assist a substantial number of veterans with subprime mortgages refinance into a safer, more affordable, VA guaranteed loan," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "Veterans in financial distress due to high rate subprime mortgages are potentially the greatest beneficiaries."

Veterans who wish to refinance their subprime or conventional mortgage may now do so for up to 100 percent of the value of the property. These types of loans were previously limited to 90 percent of the value. Congress also raised VA's maximum amount for these types of loans, from \$144,000 up to \$729,750, depending on property location.

Increasing the loan-to-value ratio and raising the maximum loan amount will allow more qualified veterans to refinance through VA, allowing for savings on interest costs or even potentially avoiding foreclosure.

For more information, or to obtain help from a VA Loan Specialist, veterans may call VA at 1-877-827-3702 or visit www.homeloans.va.gov.

VA Suicide Prevention Panel Report

A blue-ribbon panel has praised the VA for its "comprehensive strategy" in suicide prevention that includes a "number of

initiatives and innovations that hold great promise for preventing suicide attempts and completions."

Among the initiatives and innovations the group studied were VA's Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK. The lifeline is staffed by trained professionals 24 hours a day to deal with any immediate crisis that may be taking place. Nearly 33,000 veterans, family members or friends of veterans have called the lifeline in the year that it has been operating. Of those, there have been more than 1,600 rescues to prevent possible tragedy.

The panel also recommended a mixture of more research, greater cooperation among federal agencies, and more education for health care workers and community leaders to further strengthen and share VA's ability to help veterans and their families.

VA is the nation's largest provider of mental health care. More than 17,000 mental health professionals, including dedicated suicide prevention coordinators in each of VA's 153 medical centers, are available to care for veterans.

VA Health Care – In the News Again!

In its November 2008 issue, *Reader's Digest* featured an article titled: "18 Big Ideas to Fix Health Care Now." One was to convert the maintenance of medical records to electronic format. "One model that works is the VistA system," the article states, "which has been keeping electronic health records for seven million veterans since 1996." While Congress is considering funding for a similar system, the article poses this question: "Why not just use VistA nationwide?" One researcher

estimated that if 90 percent of hospitals and doctors' offices in the U.S. participated in the VistA program, about \$80 billion in health care costs could be saved annually.

In the last of their three recent debates, presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama were asked about their plans for controlling mounting health care costs in America. In his reply, Senator McCain also cited VA's electronic health records system as the model other health care providers would be wise to emulate.

Mileage Reimbursement Rates Increased

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that eligible veterans will see an increase in the mileage reimbursement they receive for travel to VA facilities for medical care.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake announced the increase in mileage reimbursement from the 28.5 cents per mile to 41.5 cents per mile, effective November 17, 2008, for all eligible veterans. Service connected veterans, veterans receiving VA pensions, and veterans with low incomes are eligible for the reimbursement.

While increasing the payment, the current deductible amounts applied to certain mileage reimbursements will remain at \$7.77 for a one-way trip, \$15.54 for a round trip, and capped at a maximum of \$46.62 per calendar month. On January 9, 2009, these deductibles will decrease to \$3 for a one-way trip, \$6 for a round trip, with a maximum of \$16 per calendar month. Deductibles can be waived in the event of financial hardship. ■

VA facility highlights

san francisco

New Advance in Robotic-Assisted Surgery

Urologic surgeons at the San Francisco VA Medical Center (SfVAMC) have performed a robotic-assisted laparoscopic partial nephrectomy, the first such operation in San Francisco or anywhere in the VA health care system.

A partial nephrectomy is the removal of a tumor and repair of the kidney, allowing complete tumor excision and pathologic analysis. It's traditionally performed through a relatively large incision, which can result in postoperative pain and a slow recovery.

The new procedure is done through small incisions, using special instruments and a video screen. The team used a DaVinci robot to perform the procedure, which requires only a one-centimeter keyhole incision. This reduces the chance of infection and improves the precision of tumor resection and kidney repair, especially when the tumor is in a hard-to-reach location using standard laparoscopic instruments.

As more small kidney tumors are detected, thanks to widespread use of abdominal CT scans and ultrasounds, the hope is that

robotic-assisted surgery will enable more patients with such tumors to enjoy the faster recovery offered by laparoscopy.

The surgical team included Dr. Badri Konety, the Chief of Urology at SfVAMC, Drs. Marc Dall'era, Matt Cooperberg, and Tom Chi. The surgical nursing team was Arsenio Villarimo, Thelma Vetvitoon, Allyson Kuppens, and Criselda Navarro. ■



Dr. Thomas Chi, Dr. Badrinath Konety, Dr. Mark Dall'era, and Dr. Matthew Cooperberg.
Photo by: Eduardo Caballero

sierra nevada

Patient Environment and Facility Improvement Project Updates

VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System is committed to continually improving the accessibility to and the environment in which we provide health care to our nation's veterans. Numerous projects are underway which will allow the facility to enhance the entire health care process.

These projects include:

- a new outreach clinic planned for

Winnemucca, scheduled to open by the end of FY 09;

- renovations to begin in the Primary Care clinic area in January 2009 to add additional exam rooms and create a Women's Health Clinic;
- four additional beds in the Emergency Department;
- renovations in our Community Living Center to create a more home-like environment;
- a complete HVAC replacement

to be undertaken over a three-year period;

- a new robot in our Pharmacy for dispensing prescriptions;
- eight additional medical/surgical beds in our inpatient unit.

Our goal is to provide veterans with the best possible medical care in the most up-to-date facility, and we're making great strides in that direction. ■

central california

VA Central California Healthcare System Unveils New Monuments

On November 8, 2008, VA Central California Healthcare System unveiled three new monuments honoring military service in a Veterans Day Program featuring military tributes, unveiling ceremonies and the release of white doves. A seven-foot black granite 'Honoring All Who Serve'

Monument, a Blue Star Garden Memorial Marker, and a Wall of Honor are all strategically placed at the facility main

entrance in a highly visible tribute to all branches of the Armed Forces and the veterans who served.

The location also creates a beautiful garden environment, well-suited for quiet reflection. The area was designed by the VA Leadership Class of 2008. The project was assisted by the generous participation from the U.S. Air Power Museum. Program



attendees numbering nearly 800 included many family members of the 246 names engraved on the wall.

Local dignitaries, veterans groups and elected officials also attended. The State President of the Blue Star

Memorials for Garden Clubs and the Director of the Sequoia Foothills District unveiled the Blue Star Memorial Marker, while the 2008 VA Leadership Class unveiled the Wall of Honor and the 'Honoring All Who Serve' Monument. ■

BE PREPARED

Although it is unknown when a pandemic may occur, you should understand the importance of planning and preparing for such an event ahead of time. The VA Sierra Pacific Network has developed this pamphlet to help you understand what a pandemic is and what you can do to prepare. You will find lots of tools and checklists inside that will help you with your planning and preparing for pandemic flu.

Pandemic Planning is Underway

The U.S. is getting ready for pandemic flu by stockpiling vaccines and other medications, watching viruses around the world, and helping state, local and tribal authorities develop pandemic flu plans. Every state/county has its own specific emergency plan. Please check with your local health department to learn more about your state's pandemic plan. These resources can be found on the back of this handout.

VA also is preparing for a pandemic. The medical centers in the VA Sierra Pacific Network are planning ways to protect the health of the veterans we serve, maintain the services we provide, and protect our staff and their families.

There are several steps you can take now to prepare for pandemic flu. Use this guide to learn more about pandemic flu, how flu spreads, how to stay healthy, how to stay informed, and how to create your own emergency plan. Keep this pamphlet in case you ever need it.

VISN 21 Pandemic Influenza Planning Committee

The VA Sierra Pacific Network, comprised of all VA health care facilities in Central and Northern California, Reno, Nevada, Hawaii, Guam and Manila, has a Pandemic Influenza Planning Committee, as do each of the facilities within the Network. These committees, which have been meeting regularly, are charged with planning and preparing our Network for pandemic flu.



Sarah Salk Pope RN

According to Sarah Salk Pope, RN, "As the Area Emergency Manager for the VA Sierra Pacific Network, I want our veterans to know that we are working hard to minimize the effects that a pandemic may have on the VISN 21 community."

STAY HEALTHY!

In addition to preparing for a pandemic, it is important to keep yourself healthy. Taking care of yourself now may help you reduce the impact of flu if you do get sick!

- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Exercise regularly
- Get plenty of sleep
- Practice good hygiene
- Avoid tobacco products
- Get your annual flu shot to protect you against seasonal flu
- Get your pneumonia vaccine as recommended

What is Pandemic Influenza?

Know the Difference:

Influenza is an illness from a virus that causes fever, coughing, muscle aches, and other symptoms, that we refer to as “flu.”

A **flu pandemic** occurs when a new flu virus spreads to people all over the world.

Pandemic flu is not the same as seasonal flu. Illness from seasonal flu occurs every year, usually in winter months. People can protect themselves from seasonal flu by getting a flu vaccine (flu shot or nasal spray as recommended by a healthcare provider).

Pandemic flu might make people sicker than seasonal flu and might spread easily to others because there would be no vaccine at first.

Seasonal Flu	Pandemic Flu
Outbreaks occur yearly, mostly in winter.	Does not happen often (only three times in 20th century).
Seasonal flu virus is like ones from the past few years. That’s why many people can fight off the illness.	Because the virus is new, many more people are likely to get sick after they are exposed to it.
Not all people get sick, so there is space in hospitals for those who are really sick.	So many people may get sick that hospitals may not be able to handle all the people who need care.
Healthy adults usually don’t get very sick. The very young, the elderly, and people with chronic health problems could get really ill.	People of any age and even healthy people could get really ill.
A vaccine for flu, as a shot or nasal spray, is made each year that works well to stop the spread of seasonal flu.	A vaccine for pandemic flu may not be available when pandemic flu first breaks out. It may take 4 to 6 months to make the first doses of the pandemic-specific vaccine.
It takes about 2 days to get sick after contact with the seasonal flu virus. A person can start to spread the virus to others about 1 day before feeling sick.	No one knows for sure how fast pandemic flu will make a person sick or spread to others. It is expected that it will be similar to seasonal flu.
Getting a yearly flu vaccine is the best way to protect yourself from seasonal flu. Wash hands often and keep them away from your eyes, nose, and mouth. Staying home when sick will also help control the spread of the flu.	A vaccine for pandemic flu may not be ready when the pandemic first breaks out. People should protect themselves and others by washing their hands and keeping them away from their eyes, nose, and mouth. People should stay home when sick. This may help control the spread of the virus.

Millions May Become Sick

Each year, the U.S. experiences about 36,000 deaths related to seasonal flu and more than 200,000 hospitalizations. It is estimated that a pandemic could cause between 200,000 and 2 million deaths in the U.S. This could overwhelm healthcare systems, including the VA, which is why it is so important to plan now.

When to Seek Medical Care

If the person:

- Is unable to drink enough fluids (has dark urine; may feel dizzy when standing)
- Has a fever for more than 3 to 5 days
- Feels better, then gets a fever again

CALL a healthcare provider

But if the person:

- Is short of breath or is wheezing
- Coughs up blood
- Has pain in the chest when breathing
- Has heart disease and chest pain
- Is unable to walk or sit up, or function normally

GO RIGHT AWAY for medical care

Prevention of Flu is the Key!

It is expected that the symptoms of pandemic flu may be similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu. Pandemic flu symptoms may be more severe than seasonal flu symptoms.

Flu is Spread Through:

Direct contact—holding hands or kissing

Indirect contact—touching infected surfaces such as a telephone and then touching your nose, mouth, or eyes before washing your hands

The air—coughs and sneezes can spread the flu virus

Help Avoid Spreading Disease:

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with tissues or your sleeve
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing
- Clean contaminated surfaces such as countertops and telephones
- Don't share personal items such as toothbrushes or eating utensils
- Stay home if you are sick

Hand-Washing Tips:

1. Lather both hands with soap and water (antibacterial soap is not necessary, though liquid soap is preferred over bar soap).
2. Rub hands together vigorously for 15-20 seconds, making sure to scrub wrists, palms, between fingers, and the backs of your hands. The scrubbing helps to remove the germs from your skin.
3. Rinse hands thoroughly with water.
4. Dry hands completely using a clean towel or paper towels.

Symptoms of Flu

- **Fever** (usually high)
- **Headache**
- **Tiredness** (can be extreme)
- **Cough**
- **Sore throat**
- **Runny or stuffy nose**
- **Body aches**
- **Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea** (more in children than adults)

A person who has flu symptoms should:

- **Rest**
- **Drink fluids**
- **Stay home**
- **Take fever reducers such as acetaminophen (eg. Tylenol) or ibuprofen (eg. Advil or Motrin)**

Drink Recipe for One Gallon Rehydration Solution

- **One gallon clean water** (4 quarts or 16 cups)
- **3/4 cup sugar** (12 tablespoons)
- **1 teaspoon table salt**

For one quart recipe, use 1 quart water, 3 tablespoons sugar, 1/4 teaspoon salt.

HOME CARE LOG: Use a chart like this and fill in the boxes each time you take care of a sick person. Share it with a doctor or medical team as needed.

Name of Patient: _____

Date	Time	Observations*	Temperature	Medications

*Describe how the sick person looks, how he/she feels or is doing, fluids or foods taken since the last time you saw or cared for them, etc.

How to Care for Someone with the Flu

- Have the sick person rest and stay in bed if running a fever
- Keep the person away from others as much as possible
- Give fluids for the sick person to drink as much as he/she can (a drink recipe for rehydration solution is provided—to help prevent dehydration, encourage sick person to drink 1/2 to 1 gallon per day)
- Use fever reducers such as acetaminophen (eg. Tylenol) or ibuprofen (eg. Advil or Motrin); follow the package label or healthcare provider's instructions
- Have the person throw away used tissues immediately—place a trash container nearby
- Wash your hands frequently, especially after caring for the sick person
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth—germs are often spread this way

IT IS IMPORTANT to think about health issues that could arise if an influenza pandemic occurs, and how they could affect you and your loved ones. For example, if a mass vaccination clinic is set up in your community, you may need to provide as much information as you can about your medical history, especially if you have a serious health condition or allergy.

Use the lists below to create a family emergency health plan. Make copies of the family member health information section and fill one out for each family member. Like much of the planning for a pandemic, this can also help prepare you for other emergencies.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS:

Personal emergency contact:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Health care:

Family physician(s) _____

Pharmacy _____

Hospital nearby _____

VA Hospital _____

In the event of a pandemic, the VA Sierra Pacific Health Care Network will advertise a Telephone Care hotline number for pandemic flu-related calls. Record that number here:

(_____) _____

FAMILY MEMBER HEALTH INFORMATION WORKSHEET:

Family Member Name: _____

Blood Type (circle one):

O+ O- A+ A-

B+ B- AB+ AB-

Allergies to Medications: _____

Other (food/pollen) Allergies: _____

Medical Conditions: _____

Current Medications/Dosages: _____

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE!

True or False

1. Pandemic Flu is the same as Seasonal Flu
2. Fever, headache, and body aches can all be symptoms of the flu
3. Flu can be spread through direct contact, indirect contact, and the air
4. It is important to begin planning for pandemic influenza now

Answers can be found at the bottom of this page.

STOCK UP ON SUPPLIES

During a pandemic, stores may be out of supplies, or you may not be able to get to a store. It is important for you to have extra supplies at home to prepare for this possibility—it is recommended to stock enough supplies to last two weeks or more. Many of these supplies will be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages or snow storms. You can rotate your stock of these items once or twice a year to avoid expiration. Make sure to check the “use by” dates on the labels.

Medical Supplies

- First Aid Handbook and general First Aid kit
- Over-the-counter medications for fever or pain relief, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen
- Other non-prescription medications (stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, vitamins)
- Prescription medications
- Prescribed medical supplies (glucose and blood pressure monitoring equipment)
- Thermometers
- Vitamins
- Fluids with electrolytes (Gatorade, PowerAde, Pedialyte)
- Protective face masks
- Soap or alcohol-based hand wash
- Cereal and protein bars
- Powdered milk
- Dried fruit, nuts, raisins, trail mix, granola
- Canned juices and dry drink mixes (Kool-Aid, Crystal Light, etc.)
- Peanut butter
- Dried pasta, rice, beans
- Pasta sauce
- Baby food (canned, jars, formula), if needed
- Pet food, if needed
- Other non-perishable foods

Other Supplies

- Cleansing agents/soaps
- Tissues
- Toilet paper
- Disposable diapers, if needed
- Feminine hygiene products, if needed
- Flashlight
- Spare batteries
- Manual can opener
- Garbage bags
- Candles and matches

For the Pantry

- Water (32-64 oz. per person per day)
- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables
- Canned soups and stews

Pandemic Influenza Resources

The following websites provide reliable pandemic influenza information. It is important that, whatever the source of medical or health information, you discuss it with your healthcare provider.

www.pandemicflu.gov

The official U.S. Government Pandemic Flu website provides up-to-date information on several pandemic flu related topics.

www.publichealth.va.gov/Flu

The national VA influenza website provides information on influenza for VA facilities, flu toolkit resources, and access to the VA pandemic influenza plan.

www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/en/index.html

The World Health Organization Pandemic Influenza website provides current information on pandemic flu.

VA facility highlights

palo alto

VAPAHCS Named Center of Excellence for Women's Health

Women veterans' physical and mental health care at the VAPAHCS was recently recognized as being some of the best in the nation. Designated a Center of Excellence for Women's Health, the VAPAHCS was the first VA facility to receive this honor.

"As everyone knows, women are playing an ever increasing role in our military and it is a critical role. Now, it is our turn to ensure they receive the best health care available

– that is our critical role," said Lisa Freeman, director of the VAPAHCS. "This designation recognizes that VAPAHCS is fulfilling that role well. From the Women's Health Clinic and Women's Trauma Recovery Program to our Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center, outpatient clinics, Vet Centers and research programs, our women veterans are held in high esteem and are recognized as integral players in our health care system."

In 2008, the VAPAHCS treated more than 6,000 women, representing approximately 10

percent of the veterans treated. Like all VA hospitals, every woman who came to VA for care was carefully screened for post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury and military sexual trauma. Many of the hospital's programs treat women veterans from all over northern California and the residential PTSD program has treated women from every state in the Union. ■



northern california

VANCHCS Meets Women Veterans' Needs

A successful women's health care relationship requires mutual understanding, respect and confidence. The NCHCS Women's Health Clinics strive to develop this relationship by providing our veterans the highest standard of women's health care in an environment of concern and courtesy.

"Our primary function is service, and we feel privileged to serve those women who served our country," said Dr. Margaret Carrico, women's health physician.

NCHCS Women Veterans Health Program currently provides female specific screening services at all sites, with military sexual trauma group counseling available at the McClellan Outpatient Clinic. Our complete range of services includes: preventive screening, health and wellness education, menopause care, gynecologic management, and chronic disease treatment.

The McClellan OPC Breast Clinic is staffed by a female general surgeon, so women can feel comfortable in their normal clinical atmosphere when discussing their treatment plan.

Inpatient gynecological surgical services are offered at Sacramento Medical Center and include major surgeries and other procedures. Outpatient gynecological surgical services, along with access to digital mammography and bone density screening, are available at Sacramento Medical Center and Martinez OPC. In 2009, mammography will be available at the Redding OPC as well.

The Women's Health Service focuses on women's health issues, with a goal of providing the best care possible for those who served our country – our Women Veterans. ■

pacific islands

VAPIHCS Hosts Secretary of Veterans Affairs

The Honorable James B. Peake, MD, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, was hosted by the VA Pacific Islands Health Care System (VAPIHCS) on September 30 and October 1. Secretary Peake was in Hawaii at the invitation of Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne. Along with other



government officials and many of the area's top leaders, he took part in what was called a "A Leaders' Summit," to develop strategies and programs to improve health care in the Pacific Islands, specifically the U.S. Territories and affiliated island communities.

While in Hawaii, Secretary Peake toured the VA Spark M. Matsunaga Medical Center,

Center for Aging, Honolulu Vet Center, and took part in a wreath ceremony at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. He took part in ribbon-cutting events for a newly installed Mammography unit for Women's Health, and a new Compensation and Pension (C&P) area. During his stay, he also met with a group of veterans going through the PTSD Residential Rehabilitation Program, and with many VA employees. ■

A Laughing Matter: Classified Classic

The following singles ad was reported to have been listed in "The Atlanta Journal-Constitution."

SINGLE BLACK FEMALE seeks male companionship, ethnicity unimportant. I'm a very good looking girl who LOVES to play. I love long walks in the woods, riding in your pickup truck, hunting, camping and fishing trips, cozy winter nights lying by the fire. Candlelight dinners will have me eating out of your hand. I'll be at the front door when you get home from work, wearing only what nature gave me. Call 404-875-6420 and ask for Daisy. I'll be waiting.

More than 15,000 men who called found themselves talking to the Atlanta Humane Society about an 8-week-old black Labrador retriever. (Men are so easy.) ■

WORD SEARCH

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

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ELECTRONIC | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> TREATMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PREVENTION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HEALTH | <input type="checkbox"/> RECOVERY | <input type="checkbox"/> COUNSELOR | <input type="checkbox"/> LIFELINE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> INTERNET | <input type="checkbox"/> CHALLENGE | <input type="checkbox"/> SURVEY | <input type="checkbox"/> RECORDS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LIFESTYLE | <input type="checkbox"/> PANDEMIC | <input type="checkbox"/> FEEDBACK | <input type="checkbox"/> BENEFITS |

My HealthVet – Personal Health Journal

The Personal Health Journal provides all these valuable features for managing and tracking your personal health information.

- **Personal Information** – Helps you keep track of your:
 - Contact information
 - Emergency contacts
 - Health care providers
 - Treatment locations
 - Health insurance information
- **Wallet ID Card** – Print your personal information on a handy, pre-formatted wallet card for convenient reference. It also has open spaces for you to list allergies and other critical medical conditions.
- **Military Health History** – Record important events from your military service, exposures you think you may have experienced, and assignments related to your health history.
- **Medications** – (including over-the-counter drugs, herbals and supplements) Record the name, starting and ending

date, prescription number, and dosage.

- **Allergies** – Keep track of your allergies by date, severity, reaction, diagnosis, and comments.
- **Medical Events** – Keep track of illnesses, accidents or other events by logging their date, treatment prescribed or comments regarding the event.
- **Immunizations** – Record the immunization, date received, method used, and any reactions you might have.
- **Health eLogs** – Track your readings for these many health aspects:
 - Blood pressure
 - Blood sugar
 - Cholesterol
 - Body temperature
 - Body weight
 - Heart rate
 - Pain ■



My HealthVet

continued from p. 1

To locate these free on-line courses, go to the Research Health tab, then to the Mental Health tab, and click on the MyHealthVet Learning Center tab, where you'll find brief descriptions of each of these courses

Lab results, Appointments and Wellness Reminders are also newly available. In the near future, Secure Messaging will allow you to communicate with your health care team, and this will become available gradually.

Upgraded Accounts

To get the most out of your My HealthVet Personal Health Record, visit your local VA facility to get an upgraded account, known as In-Person Authentication (IPA). An upgraded account will allow you to see the names of VA prescriptions, not just the numbers; find out about local VA events; and be the first to access all new My HealthVet features that will enhance your Personal Health Record.

Ask about IPA at your next clinic visit. It's one step closer to becoming an active partner in your health care. ■

Keeping Your Personal Information Secure

The Federal Trade Commission estimates that up to nine million Americans annually have their identities stolen. Identity theft is a serious crime, and protecting our veterans from it is given the highest priority throughout the VHA, which maintains an aggressive privacy violation tracking system and mandates ongoing training for all personnel.

As a veteran, you should also take steps to protect yourself against identity theft, including the following:

- Shred all materials containing personal information before discarding them;
- Carefully protect your Social Security number; don't carry your card or include the number on your checks;
- Don't divulge personal information via phone, mail or Internet, without knowing exactly who you're dealing with;
- Never click on links sent in unsolicited e-mails, or respond to e-mail requests to disclose personal information;

- Don't use obvious passwords (birth date, mother's maiden name, last four digits of your Social Security number, etc.);
- Always keep personal information in a secure place, especially in circumstances (home, office, etc.) where others may have access to it.

Working together, we can make sure you don't become a victim of this serious crime, which can be very expensive and time-consuming to counteract. ■

Kerri Childress, Editor
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Where to find us!

VA MEDICAL CENTER SAN FRANCISCO

VA MEDICAL CENTER SAN FRANCISCO

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 San Francisco, CA 94121-1598
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DOWNTOWN S.F. VA OPC

401 3rd Street
 San Francisco, Calif., 94107
 (415) 551-7300

VA EUREKA OPC

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

VA SAN BRUNO OPC

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

VA SANTA ROSA OPC

3315 Chanate Road
 Santa Rosa, CA 95404
 (707) 570-3855

VA UKIAH OPC

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

VA NORTHERN CALIFORNIA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

VA SACRAMENTO MEDICAL CENTER

10535 Hospital Way
 Mather, CA 95655
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VA MARTINEZ OPC

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

VA REDDING OPC

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 Redding, CA 96002
 (530) 226-7555

VA CHICO OPC

280 Cohasset Road
 Chico, CA 95926
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VA MCCLELLAN OPC

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 McClellan Park, CA 95652-1074
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VA MARE ISLAND OPC

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 Mare Island, CA 94592
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VA OAKLAND MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAM

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 Oakland, CA 94607
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2221 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
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19747 Greenley Road
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1050 North Cherry Street
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 (559) 684-8703

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3605 Hospital Road, Suite D
 Atwater, CA 95301-5140
 (209) 381-0105

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IOANNIS A. LOUGARIS VA MEDICAL CENTER

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 Reno, NV 89502-2597
 (775) 786-7200

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345 West A Street
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VA SIERRA FOOTHILLS OPC

11985 Heritage Oak Place
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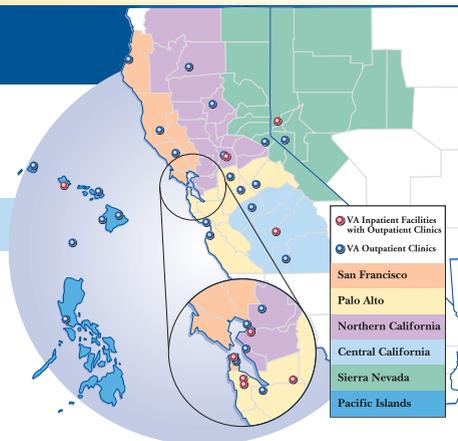
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SPARK M. MATSUNAGA VA MEDICAL CENTER

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