



VA HEALTH CARE Defining **EXCELLENCE** in the 21st Century

Veteran Connection

VA Portland Health Care System Newsletter

Keeping the Promise - Advancing Excellence

Happy Holidays & Happy New Year from all the Portland HCS staff



VA Portland Health Care System

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Produced by the VAPORHCS Public Affairs Office

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS ??
Please email us at...
VHAPOR-PublicAffairs@med.va.gov

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For all the [VAPORHCS Events and Classes](#)—got to the VAPORHCS Web page...

<http://www.portland.va.gov/calendar.asp>

December 2014

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Welcome from the Director



Joanne M. Krumberger
Director, VA Portland Health Care System

Merry Christmas!

Thank you to the 68 attendees that joined VAPORHCS and the VBA Portland Regional Office for the Veterans Town Hall on December 9 in Vancouver. Between Vancouver and the Salem and Bend CBOCs via video teleconference, we had 40 Veterans participate in the two hour discussion—this was about double the participation of our September Veterans Town Hall.



VAPORHCS and VBA Portland Regional Office Town Hall Veterans Town Hall at the Vancouver Division VA Campus, Dec. 9, 2014

The comments, questions and discussions at these events are very helpful for us to identify issues and concerns direct from the Veterans and family members we serve. Here are a few of the comments and themes that came up during the meeting: request to expand the VA MOVE and VA physical therapy programs, questions related to the Choice Act, the new VAPORHCS Veteran & Family Advisory Council, and Patient-Centered Community Care funding, and we had a couple specific suggestions related to specific outreach opportunities, futures town hall events, and com-

ments on how to improve our appointment reminder system. In addition, our Patient Advocates met with six Veterans during the event to address specific issues and VBA had employees on site who addressed specific Veteran benefits issues and answered questions.

I assure you that we take your comments and questions to heart. I promise that we will look into all issues and then follow-up with discussions or through other communication tools accordingly.



Joanne Krumberger speaks to Veterans at the Bend CBOC by video teleconference during the Dec. 9 Veterans Town Hall.

Details about our next quarterly Veterans Town Hall will be communicated soon. We will announce the date in next months *Veteran Connection* as well as on our [Facebook](#) page, our [VAPORHCS Web page](#), and through other means.

Thank you for your service to our county. I wish you all and your families a joyous holiday season and I look forward to working with you in the New Year.

In Service to Veterans,
Joanne M. Krumberger

Pain management — information and resources (Veterans Town Hall feedback)

By Thomas Carr, MD, VAPORHCS

Chair, VAPORHCS Opioid Process Improvement Workgroup and lead for the Opioid Safety Initiative

The VA has developed an Opioid Safety Initiative in the last 18 months to optimize practices around opioid and benzodiazepine use for chronic conditions, including chronic pain.

We know that persons who are on high doses of opioids or combinations of opioids and benzodiazepines are at higher risk of complications from these medicines, including overdose. At VAPORHCS we are planning a meeting of primary care clinicians and mental health clinicians to find ways we can work together to assist Veterans in tapering their opioid and benzodiazepine use. We know that in the last year there has been a greater

than 10% reduction in the number of Veterans using opioids for pain. We are slowly expanding services that can help persons living with chronic pain to manage their pain, including classes about managing chronic conditions, classes to learn cognitive behavioral or mindfulness techniques to manage pain conditions, Tai Chi, yoga and water exercises classes to teach Veterans to recondition their bodies, and Veteran led support group for Veterans to learn from each other how to get the most out of their lives despite the pain.



New Initiatives

VA, National Institutes of Health seek alternatives to addictive opioids

According to a recent Army study in the Journal of the American Medical Association, nearly half of all troops who have come home from Afghanistan and Iraq are coping with chronic pain. Chronic pain profoundly affects Veterans' quality of life, interfering with work, recreation, and social interaction. Says Indianapolis VA researcher Dr. Matthew Bair, "It's important that we treat chronic pain, and the most common way we treat it is with medication."

For the entire article — [click here](#).

Here is a link for the VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines [Management of Opioid Therapy \(OT\) for Chronic Pain](#).

Additional information is available on this [Web page](#) to help Veterans understand VA and DOD clinical practice guideline with regard to opioid therapy.

Military Sexual Trauma (MST) — VAPORHCS resources and related research

(Veterans Town Hall feedback)

The VAPORHCS *Center for Women Veterans Health* opened Sept. 2010 at the main Portland Division hospital.

2010

- 400 Women Veterans
- 1 Physician

2014

- 1,600 Women Veterans
- 3 Physicians

Services:

- Primary care, gynecology, urology, mental health, social work, women's self-help/behavioral health groups, & maternity program.
- One designated women's health provider / CBOC.
- At each of our CBOCs (with the exception of N. Coast)

VAPORHCS has at least one designated women's health provider who are specially trained in women's health.

VAPORHCS Military Sexual Trauma Coordinator

Kelly Dominici, Licensed Clinical Social Worker

Phone—503-220-8262, Ext. 32713

Email—Kelly.Dominici2@va.gov

Here are some studies on MST.

Health Services Research & Development:

- IAE 05-291 — [Evaluation of Military Sexual Trauma Screening and Treatment](#)
- 3029 — [MST Screening and Associated Medical and Mental Health Conditions](#)

VA health care enrollment options (Veterans Town Hall feedback)

There are different ways to enroll for health care....

On the Webb... <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/>

THE FASTEST AND EASIEST WAY TO APPLY OR UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION IS ONLINE!

First time enrolling for benefits or already enrolled?
Submit or update your personal, insurance, and financial information here!



You will need [Adobe Reader](#) or newer to open the 10-10EZ form.

By Mail...



Print the 10-10EZ form or 10-10EZR form or call to have the form mailed to you. Complete and sign the application, then mail it to:

Health Eligibility Center
2957 Clairmont Road, Suite 200
Atlanta, GA 30329-1647

VAPORHCS is seeking Veteran and Family Advisors



We are looking for Veterans or family members who have:

- Excellent communication skills
- Ability to use his/her own experience constructively
- Received care at one of VAPORHCS facilities
- A positive attitude
- Ability to see beyond his/her own personal experience
- A desire to bring about meaningful change
- Time to commit to monthly meetings

VAPORHCS is presently seeking Veterans (non-employees) and family members for the Veteran & Family Advisory Board. If you know someone who is a good candidate, please ask if they might be interested. To apply to be on the Veteran and Family Advisory Board, please contact Valdez Bravo, the Veteran and Family Advisory Board Coordinator, at (503) 220-8262, ext. 53082 or by email - Valdez.Bravo@va.gov.

OTHER WAYS TO APPLY OR UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION...

By Phone...



You can apply for enrollment of your benefits or update your information by phone by calling **1-877-222-VETS** (8387), Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM (Eastern Time). A VA representative will have your completed form sent to you for verification and signature.

In person...

... at the Portland Division main hospital enrollment office or at the Salem, Vancouver West Linn, Hillsboro or Bend CBOCs.

[Have questions? Need assistance?](#) - call 1-877-222-VETS (8387)

Or you can call the VAPORHCS Enrollment office at 800-949-1004, Ext. 55069 or 503-220-8262, Ext 55069.

As soon as Veteran is enrolled and verified by VHA Health Eligibility Center in Atlanta - Veteran should be mailed a verification letter. If you do not get this—give us a call at the number above.

Trying to find information about us?

Check us out on...



www.facebook.com/vaportland

We will update our [Facebook Events page](#) as information is confirmed or updated.

Our [VAPORHCS Web Calendar](#) can provide useful info on events and classes. You can find it at the bottom of our VAPORHCS main [Web page](#)

Email us to get on our Veteran Distribution list...

VHAPOR-PublicAffairs@med.va.gov