



VA HEALTH CARE Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

Veteran Connection

VA Portland Health Care System Newsletter

Keeping the Promise - Advancing Excellence



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

or call 503-402-2975

Lincoln's Promise (VA Mission Statement)

"To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans.

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

www.portland.va.gov/calendar.asp

Message from the Director



Todd D. Burnett, PsyD
Acting Director, VA Portland Health Care System

As many of you are already aware, on March 21st I was afforded the privilege of serving this organization as the Acting Director of VAPORHCS. Ms. Krumberger, after 37 stellar years of public service to Veterans across the nation, has been transitioning into her retirement and I wish her every success and happiness in the adventure ahead and am grateful for her many contributions to the organization.

Ms. Krumberger's vision and leadership at VAPORHCS since May 2014 has led to numerous positive changes in improving the care experience we provide to our nation's Veterans and the families who support them. I am also keenly aware that she has built positive and effective relationships with our many Veteran Service Organizations and congressional offices across our 26-county catchment area. Our mission *"To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans* cannot be accomplished alone. Ms. Krumberger's efforts to facilitate communication and enhance collaboration with our partners will continue on. Through these hallways and across our

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12 sites of care walk the finest healthcare providers and staff in the nation. We also enjoy an inspiring and dedicated leadership core that is second to none and is wholly committed to the success of our staff in delivering world-class healthcare to Veterans. It is an honor to serve with you all and I am committed to advancing a legacy of exemplary healthcare quality at VAPORHCS that is worthy of our Veterans, their families, and our staff.

The Veteran Town Halls, our Veteran Service Organization/Officer Committee meetings, and regularly schedule congressional stakeholder meetings will continue; if you have ideas to improve upon these venues, I appreciate and welcome your feedback. I am grateful for the many, often unheralded, contributions each of you make to go above and beyond to facilitate the success of our Veterans; thank you! I look forward to serving you all as the acting director until a permanent director is selected. VA leadership has already begun the search and is moving as quickly as possible to get the right person here in a timely manner.

To share ideas and feedback, please send them to my Public Affairs team at VHAPOR-publicaffairs@med.va.gov.

Thank you,

Todd D. Burnett

(Click [here](#) for Dr. Burnett's biography)

VA Veterans Town Hall—save the date—May 26 at 5 pm

FOR WHO? Veterans, family members

WHEN? May 26, 2016, 5–6:60 pm

WHERE? VAPORHCS PVAMC Auditorium, 3710 US Veterans Hospital Rd. Portland

WHAT? Director, VAPORHCS & Director

Portland VBA Regional Office share information, answer questions and address concerns. If you have any questions, please contact the Public Affairs Office at VHAPOR-PublicAffairs@med.va.gov or 503-402-2975

More information is on the [VAPORHCS Facebook page](#)

If you would like to be added to the VAPORHCS Partner email list, please email us at VHAPOR-PublicAffairs@med.va.gov

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day celebrated on Mar 29 at VA Portland



Kelly W. Cape, a U.S. Army Vietnam Veteran receives a Vietnam Veteran lapel pin from VAPORHCS Acting Director Dr. Todd Burnett on March 29 in the Atrium of the Portland VA Medical Center. Mr. Cape is a member of American Veterans (AMVETS) Post 1776 as well as an active member of VAPORHCS VSO Committee.

coincide with the official designation of Military Assistance Advisory Group-Vietnam;

- May 15, 1975 marks the end of the battle precipitated by the seizure of the American merchant ship SS Mayaguez.

VA staff and other guests were present to thank and honor these Vietnam era Veterans as well as all 7.2 million living Vietnam Veterans and the 9 million families of those who served from November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975, regardless of duty station location.

The Veteran lapel pin presented has an eagle on the front representing courage, honor and dedicated service to our nation and says “Vietnam Veteran.” On the back it says “A grateful nation thanks and honors you – USA Vietnam War Commemoration.”

VAPORHCS and many other organizations locally and across the county will be hosting more events over the next two years to honor our Vietnam Veterans and present these pins as part of the initiative.

March 29 was “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day” a date commemorating the final withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam more than 40 years ago.

The Director VAPORHCS, Director of VBA Portland Regional Office, and Veteran representatives from Senator Wyden and Congressman Schrader’s offices honored approximately 80 Vietnam era Veterans presenting them with Vietnam Veteran lapel pins. This day was part of a national effort to recognize the contributions and commemorates the sacrifices of the men and women Veterans who served in Vietnam.

The VA is a commemorative partner with the Department of Defense and is hosting events all over the country to publically thank and honor Vietnam Era Veterans who served between 1955 and 1975.

Why these dates???

- November 1, 1955 was selected to



Vietnam War Veteran lapel pin presented to Veterans at Portland VA March 29.



April is National Cancer Control Month VAPORHCS Division of Hospital & Specialty Medicine expands access to colon cancer screenings

The Division of Hospital & Specialty Medicine (DHSM) expanded Veteran access to care in colon cancer screenings.

The Gastroenterology (GI) service recently led a program to increase timely access to colon cancer screening through Veteran education, implementation of new screening technologies, and by optimizing the use of the Veteran's Choice Program for those who preferred other types of care options. The project replaced existing fecal occult blood detection technology with the newer and more sensitive and easier to utilize fecal immunochemical tests (FIT). The fecal occult blood test (FOBT), introduced in the late 1970's, has been the simplest and most evaluated screening method available for colorectal cancer (CRC). FOBT is a fecal-based colorectal cancer screening option that allows patients to procure samples in the comfort of their own homes and at their convenience. FIT, sometimes identified as iFOBT (immunochemical fecal occult blood test), is an improved FOBT

What Is Colorectal Cancer?

Colorectal cancer is a malignant growth that develops inside the large bowel. Most bowel cancers develop from tiny growths called polyps. Not all polyps become cancerous. However, some polyps can become cancerous over time. Cancer can narrow and block your bowel or cause bleeding. In more advanced cases, cancer can spread beyond the bowel to other organs.

Colorectal cancer is the fourth most common cancer in the US, affecting approximately 140,000 new patients every year and causing approximately 50,000 deaths. These numbers are staggering given the fact that most colorectal cancer is preventable and treatable.

How important is screening? - VERY

Colorectal cancer, though one of the deadliest forms of cancer, is the most preventable and treatable. But prevention and treatment starts with screening on a regular basis.

If colorectal cancer is detected before it has spread beyond the bowel, the chance of surviving for at least 5 years after diagnosis is 90%. Most people are able to return to their pre-cancer lifestyles.

Early detection offers the best hope of reducing the number of Americans who die each year from colorectal cancer. **Talk to your doctor about colorectal cancer screening today.**

with higher sensitivity and specificity when compared to guaiac FOBT (or gFOBT). When used yearly, FIT has accuracy rates near those of colonoscopy without the invasiveness, inconvenience, discomfort and cost.

VAPORHCS formed a team who contacted more than 1,000 eligible Veterans this past year to educate them on both the FIT testing option and the Veteran's Choice Program, for those Veterans desiring a traditional screening colonoscopy. In the first four months of the program, nursing staff provided FIT test materials to nearly 800 Veterans and facilitated outsourcing to the Choice Program for an additional 200 Veterans. This resulted in a reducing wait times for colon cancer screening by 65%. VAPORHCS also expanded colonoscopy services by opening Saturday colonoscopy clinics from February to September 2015 completing over 100 procedures.

Definitions

High-sensitivity fecal occult blood test (FOBT) - which includes FIT, checks for hidden blood in three consecutive stool samples.

Colonoscopy - where physicians use a flexible, lighted tube (colonoscope) to look at the interior walls of the rectum and the entire colon. During this procedure, samples of tissue may be collected for closer examination, or polyps may be removed. Colonoscopies can be used as screening tests or as follow-up diagnostic tools when the results of another screening test are positive.

Fecal immunochemical test (FIT) - screening test for colon cancer. It tests for hidden blood in the stool, which can be an early sign of cancer. FIT only detects human blood from the lower intestines; easy to do from home; no special diets or medicines.

VAPORHCS Cancer Care Navigation Team

Support for the unique needs of Veterans with cancer and their loved ones



A diagnosis of cancer can cause great distress for a Veteran and his/her loved ones. Initiating timely treatment often requires multiple visits to a variety of diagnostic and specialty care services.

Coordination of these visits can be complex due to unique Veteran needs and barriers to care, including co-morbidities, travel and lodging concerns, and psychosocial issues that make it challenging for a Veteran to receive timely care.



Members of VAPORHCS CCNT.

In October 2013, VAPORHCS implemented a Cancer Care Navigation Team (CCNT) pilot program to support the unique needs of Veterans with cancer and their loved ones to ensure timely, Veteran-centered, coordinated care.

VAPORHCS' CCNT is part of a VISN20 network program that supports Veterans and their families with the goal of ensuring that Veterans have timely access to care and needed psychosocial support. There are a total of eight CCNTs across VISN20 located in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. CCNTs in Oregon are located in Portland, Roseburg and White City.

The VAPORHCS CCNT team consists of four multi-disciplinary team members and a program manager. Traudi Rose, an oncology certified registered nurse (RN), is the program manager. The local CCNT is comprised of two RNs: Jennifer King, and Linda Garrison; a licensed clinical social worker, Marcia Long; and a program support assistant, Philip Branscum. During the past two years, the VAPORHCS CCNT has supported more than 800 Veterans and tracks between 200-300 Veterans every month.

To support the program goals and network approach the VAPORHCS CCNT priority group includes Veterans who reside outside the Portland catchment area with a suspicion or diagnosis of cancer. The CCNT team also supports Veterans from within the Portland catchment area on a case-by-case basis if they present complex psychosocial needs, or require intense coordination.

VAPORHCS CCNT supports most cancer types, but specifically focuses on Veterans receiving multimodality treatments requiring complex coordination of care across multiple services. Coordination occurs among specialties such as oncology, surgery, radiation oncology, dental, speech, nutrition and others, depending on specific needs. Cancer types the CCNT most frequently work with include lung, head and neck, colorectal, pancreatic and melanoma.

Team member Jennifer King explains that CCNT ensures that the patient understands the diagnosis, treatment plan and logistical arrangements. "We often participate in patient appointments and facilitate meetings between providers and patients and family members," said King. "Essentially, we are a barrier-focused team whose primary function is to get the patient into timely treatment, and to facilitate a high level of understanding between the patient and his/her providers. We often facilitate communication between Veterans, their cancer care team, and their home primary care team."

In addition to navigation, CCNT also offers cancer support and educational programs. Marcia Long, the CCNT social worker, has initiated a variety of programs for patients undergoing treatment, cancer survivors, and caregivers to help enhance coping and provide emotional support.

Programs include: "Art as Therapy," in which patients can become more self-aware, and be able to express fears, anxieties and other emotions that may be difficult to talk about; a program titled "Food, Friends and Fun!," two-hour sessions that include educational cancer-related topics, nutritional education activity, and a light lunch; "Sound Therapy," meetings that assist with relaxation and rehabilitation; "Food as Medicine," with guest chefs who provide lessons on how to prepare simple life-giving healthy nutrition; and group therapy that features Mandala Art coloring that is intended to reduce stress and inspire creativity.



Dementia Education Workshops for Veterans and family members

Sign up now for workshops in Hillsboro CBOC, West Linn CBOC, and Portland VAMC in May and June

Registration Now Open for Savvy Caregiver Class
 This is a six-week educational series designed especially for unpaid caregivers caring for a loved one with a dementia diagnosis.
Classes in March & April in Salem
Call Kristi for more information

Dementia 101: Introduction to Dementia

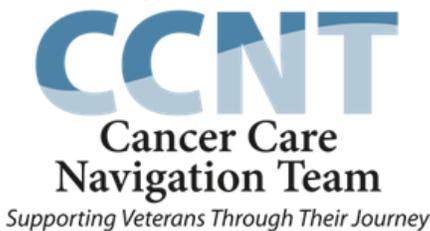
What is dementia? How is it diagnosed? How does it affect my loved one?

In this workshop, you will learn:

- What dementia is and how it is diagnosed
- The different types of dementias including Alzheimer’s disease, vascular dementia, lewy-body dementia, and fronto-temporal dementia
- Eight cognitive losses in dementia: memory, judgment, attention, perception, reasoning, organization, abstraction, and language
- How cognitive losses impact the person with dementia and strategies to adapt to these changes

Class Location	Class Dates & Times
Hillsboro CBOC	Thursday May 1st & 9th 10 a.m. – noon
West Linn CBOC	Tuesday, June 7 10 a.m. – noon
Portland VA Medical Center	Tuesday, June 21 10 a.m. – noon

Call Kristi Ketchum, LCSW to register: (503) 220-8262 ext. 58594



Cancer Survivors and Caregivers come listen and relax!

Sound Therapy for those coping or recovering from illness

April 7, 10 to 10:30 a.m.

Both classes are at the **Portland VAMC**
1st, Building 100, Room 1C-188(Across from PT/OT)

Call the Navigation Team Social Worker to register
 Marcia Long,
 503-220-8262 Ext. 51754

Art as Therapy for Cancer Survivors and Caregivers

Second Thursday of each month, 10 a.m. to noon

Our program will offer you a chance to express yourself, treat yourself to a relaxing and restorative activity, and connect with others going through cancer treatment and recovery.

- Become more self-aware, express fears, anxieties, and other emotions that may be difficult to talk about
- Communicate and interact better with others
- Build self-esteem, reduce stress, improve quality of life
- Find comfort, freedom, and hope

Free tax return preparation for Veterans, military members and their families



The VA has partnered with various organizations to provide free help with taxes for Veterans!

Click [HERE](#) for more information but below are a few example of these resources.

Please note there are some restrictions as to salary and other limitations for who can take advantage of some of these services....

- [IRS' Volunteer Income Tax Assistance \(VITA\)](#) and [Tax Counseling for the Elderly \(TCE\)](#)
- [MyFreeTaxes](#) (United Way)
- [IRS.gov/FreeFile](#)
- [TurboTax Freedom Edition](#)—is available to taxpayers with income of \$31,000 or less, or
 - ◊ Eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).
 - * [Second Story TaxAct](#) is another IRS Free File option. To qualify for free tax preparation, printing, & e-filing, your adjusted gross income must be \$52,000 or less, and you must be between the ages of 18 through 58 years old.
 - * [H&R Block's Free File](#) offers free online assistance if you earned \$58,000 or less, and if you were 53 years old or younger as of December 31, 2014.
 - * [Online Taxes \(OLT\)](#) offers free tax preparation if your Adjusted Gross Income is between \$13,000 and \$60,000 in 2014.
 - * The following free online software companies are available exclusively to members of the military:

[TurboTax Military Edition](#) created a software program specifically for service members. There is currently a free version for junior enlisted and a discount version for senior enlisted and officers.

[Military OneSource](#) is once again offering a no-cost, electronic tax filing service. If you are eligible under the Military OneSource program, you can complete, save, and file your 2014 federal and up to three state returns online at no cost.

- [TaxSlayer Military](#) is available to all active duty military. You can prepare both your federal and state return

Please note that VA does not endorse any of these sites, but brings your attention to them as they have tax services available specifically for Veterans and military families.

NOTE—the last day to file your 2016 taxes is

April 18