Message from the Director

Michael W. Fisher
Director, VA Portland Health Care System

With all the recent changes in VA leadership, I wanted to provide you the latest information on the priorities of the VA straight from VA Secretary Shulkin, which, to a large degree, are mirrored at the local level.

Greater choice for care

- Redesigning the Choice Program 40/30 rule (There are reported legislative changes in the making now in Washington D.C. More information is to follow in the near future on this.)
- Improving transparency (Examples include the new website www.accesstocare.va.gov and posted Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) data on the web).
- Building a high performing, integrated network of care. (Locally, for example, in October 2016, VAPORHCS had zero dental provider agreements in our catchment area, today we have 175; for Home and Community Based Services we had zero agreements in November 2016 and today we have 82).

Modernize systems

- Announced this month, VA is adopting a new Electronic Health Record (EHR) system; the same state-of-the-art solution selected, and currently being deployed, by the Department of Defense.
- Improving infrastructure and streamlining services.

Focus resources more efficiently

- Strengthening of foundational services.
- VA/DOD Community coordination.

Improve timeliness of services

Access to care and wait times (For VAPORHCS, according to the VHA Patient Access Data - www.va.gov/health/access-audit.asp, VAPORHCS completed appointment times for the period ending April 2017 (50,256 total appointments) was 94% of total appointments were completed within 30 days; 79% within 0-7 days; and nearly 7% within 8-14 days; we are continually working to improve on our access to care.)

Suicide prevention

- VA “Getting to Zero” campaign.

The VA Office of Suicide Prevention is taking the lead on this incredibly important endeavor to reduce suicide risk among our nation's Veterans which is currently estimated at 20 Veterans/day who are taking their own lives. The campaign will focus on key facets of VA's approach, including leveraging partnerships to raise awareness of resources among Veterans and their support networks, and use data and technology to enable the VA to identify and provide specialized care for Veterans at heightened risk for suicide. More information on related VAPORHCS resources are on page 3-4 of this newsletter.

As we continue down the path over the next several months and years to implement these priorities, I intend to keep our stakeholders informed of the progress and gain your feedback.

Thank you for your service and for letting us serve you.

Michael Fisher
There are heroes among us! When the horrific events on Friday (May 26, 2017) unfolded on the TriMet MAX train in Portland, Army Veteran Marcus Knipe was waiting on the platform, on his way to go downtown to the Portland Rose Festival fun center. It was his day off from VA Portland Health Care System, the sun was shining, and he was happy to spend time with his family and friends.

Suddenly, he heard a commotion from another train stopped at the station and was surprised to see people running from the train and hear screaming. Just then, one of the Good Samaritans who was severely injured with stab wounds to his neck stumbled from the train and yelled for help.

Marcus sprang into action without thinking about his own safety, while his family escaped the scary scene, and immediately applied pressure to the victim's wound. Marcus' Infantryman basic medical training kicked in and he kept the young man calm and talking during the ordeal before ambulances arrived. He even helped the young man call his mom to tell her he was injured. After speaking with police, Marcus joined his family for their planned evening. The young man is recovering from his wounds but sadly two other Good Samaritans on the train did not survive.

Thank you Marcus for stepping in without regard to your own safety and using your military skills to help where desperately needed. We are humbled by your heroic lifesaving actions on Friday and thank you today, and every day, for serving other Veterans at VA Portland Health Care System.

- VAPORHCS -
Did you know?
• The Crisis Line answers more than 90% of calls within 8 seconds, and only approximately 1% of calls are being rerouted to a backup call center.
• Since May 2017, calls for service have increased from 2,000 a week to more than 2,250.
  • The center handles 500,000+ calls per year, and has initiated nearly 75,000 emergency service responses since 2007.
Suicide Prevention: Everyone’s Business

Those in crisis often display warning signs:

Learn to recognize these warning signs:

• Hopelessness, feeling like there’s no way out
• Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
• Feeling like there is no reason to live
• Rage or anger
• Engaging in risky activities without thinking
• Increasing alcohol or drug abuse
• Withdrawing from family and friends

The presence of the following signs requires immediate attention:

• Thinking about hurting or killing yourself
• Looking for ways to kill yourself
• Talking about death, dying, or suicide
• Self-destructive behavior such as drug abuse, weapons, etc.

VA Portland Suicide Prevention Team provides outreach & training
Contact: Monireh Moghadam, LCSW
VAPORHCS Suicide Prevention Coordinator
Monireh.Moghadam@va.gov
Team Line; 503-402-2857

Coping and Symptom Management Phone Apps
• http://www.t2health.dcoe.mil/products/mobile-apps
• https://mobile.va.gov/appstore

RESOURCES

VA’s center of excellence for research and education on the prevention, understanding and treatment of PTSD.
Phone: 1-802-296-6300
www ptsd va gov

Information on VA services and resources, understanding military culture and experience, and tools for working with a variety of mental health conditions.
www mentalhealth va gov/communityproviders/
New VA Online Tool Helps Veterans Learn About and Compare Effective PTSD Treatments

VA recently launched a new online tool that can help Veterans compare various treatment options for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The PTSD Treatment Decision Aid is a free, interactive online tool that helps educate patients about effective treatment options for PTSD and encourages them to participate actively in decisions about their care.

The tool includes information about evidence-based PTSD treatments, such as talk therapy and prescription medication options. It also includes useful information designed for people who have served in the military. Users can watch videos of providers explaining different treatment options and what to expect with those treatments, and hear from Veterans who have benefited from them.

Veterans can also build a chart to compare the treatments they prefer and print a personalized summary to share with their providers. All personal information is erased once the tool is closed to protect users’ privacy.

According to VA findings, approximately eight of every 100 people will experience PTSD at some point in their lifetimes, and almost 620,000 of the Veterans treated by VA have a diagnosis of PTSD.

VA National Center for PTSD resources… www ptsd va gov/about/ptsd-awareness/
Respite Care for Caregivers

As a caregiver, to be strong for your Veteran you must first be strong. Respite care is an occasional way to take a break from your caregiving duties and relax, renew your energy, and avoid caregiver burnout.

Veterans who require a caregiver may be eligible for up to 30 days of respite care each year. This care can be offered in your home, at a VA community living center, at a VA-contracted community residential care facility, or at an adult day health care center.

To see if you are eligible for respite care services, call the Caregiver Support Line—1-855-260-3274, or enter your zip code and call your local Caregiver Support Coordinator.

With VA’s Caregiver Support Line assistance is just a quick phone call away. Whether you’re in need of immediate assistance or have questions about what services you may be eligible for, the caring licensed professionals who answer the support line can:

- Tell you about the assistance available from VA.
- Help you access services.
- Connect you with the Caregiver Support Coordinator at a VA Medical Center near you.
- Just listen, if that’s what you need right now.

If you’re just getting started with VA, calling the Caregiver Support Line is a great first step to take to learn more about the support that’s available to you.

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VA Portland Health Care System
Caregiver Support Coordinator

Contact:
Leah Christensen, LCSW
Leah.Christensen@va.gov
503-273-5210

VA
Veterans Health Administration
VA Portland recognized nationally for environmental excellence in health care

Practice Greenhealth, the nation’s leading organization dedicated to environmental sustainability in health care, recognized VAPORHCS with the Greening the Operating Room (OR) award. Only five VA facilities in the nation earned this recognition.

The Greening the OR category honors hospitals for leadership in implementation and innovation in the surgical department. Winners have demonstrated innovative approaches to waste minimization, clinical plastic recycling, reformulation of operating room kits, single-use device reprocessing, use of reusable sterilization cases, and a range of other programs and associated metrics. This recognition encompasses efforts ranging from energy reduction, to green building design, to long-term commitments to healthier environments.

VA Portland Health Care System

Recipient of the

— 2017 —

Practice Greenhealth

GREENING THE OR RECOGNITION

AWARD

VA Portland earns recognition 3rd year in a row

The Human Rights Campaign, the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) civil rights organization, recognized VAPORHCS as a leading healthcare organization related to policies and practices regarding the equity and inclusion of their LGBTQ patients, visitors and employees. The HEI 2017 evaluated a total of 1,619 healthcare facilities nationwide.

VAPORHCS was one of eight hospitals in Oregon to achieve 2017 HEI Leader status and the only VA facility in VISN 20 to achieve Leader Status this year. Of the 122 VA hospitals/health care systems who participated in the HEI this year, only 43 (35%) achieved Leader Status.

Go to the VAPORHCS website HERE for more information on LGBT related services.

-VAPORHCS-
Opioid overdose can happen. Even when you take your medications as prescribed

Know your risk.

Veterans are two times more likely to die from an opioid overdose.

Half of those who overdose on opioids are also taking benzodiazepines. For example: diazepam, lorazepam, alprazolam

Mixing opioids with alcohol increases your risk.

Protect yourself. Ask your provider how to reduce your risk.

For more information visit: www.visn20.med.va.gov/VISN20/services/pain/
Hepatitis C—Request the Test!!! Everyone should be tested!!!

Were you born between 1945 – 1965?

- 3 in 4 people with Hepatitis C were born between these years
- You are 5 times more likely to have Hepatitis C

More than 1 million people living with Hepatitis C DO NOT KNOW they are infected!

Hepatitis C is...

- ... a leading cause of Liver Cancer
- ... the #1 reason for Liver Transplants

NEW treatment includes Pills or Tablets only

- Average 8-12 weeks of Treatment
- Typically the side effects are mild

What to do?

If you want to be tested call the VAPORHCS hotline NOW:

If you know you have Hepatitis C, call the VAPORHCS hotline NOW:

(503) 220-8262 Ext 53471
**Spirit of ‘45 Day**

Willamette National Cemetery  
Sunday, August 13, 2017, 11 AM

**To Celebrate,** attend Spirit of ‘45 Day, Willamette National Cemetery Aug 13, 11:00 a.m. with General Jimmy Doolittle’s granddaughter, Jonna Doolittle Hoppes

**To Honor,** submit your WWII military photo at:  
[www.orspiritof45.org/photo](http://www.orspiritof45.org/photo)

**To Inspire,** sponsor your hero in one of our Oregon Veterans Day Parades

**The Spirit of ’45 mission:** *To commemorate the achievements and virtues of the World War II generation, on the 2nd Sunday of every August, so as to inspire future generations*