



# Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs *Good News*



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**Welcome to Good News. This Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) newsletter highlights the accomplishments and sharing activities at both the local and national levels.**

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## **Official Opening of Fairfield Joint Inpatient Mental Health Unit**

The David Grant Medical Center (DGMC) held a ribbon cutting ceremony on June 16, 2009, marking the grand opening of its new joint DoD/VA Joint Inpatient Mental Health Unit (JIMHU). The new \$6.7 million joint psychiatric inpatient unit utilizes integrated treatment approaches to increase the patient's ability to successfully cope during a crisis, thus facilitating recovery and building resilience.

"Those of you who are involved in this know that there are many more opportunities for joint partnerships between the VA and DGMC," said Dr. Brian O'Neill, director of VA's Northern California Health Care System (VANCHCS). "It is a full partnership -- we have a full seat at the table," explained Dr. O'Neill. "All of the services that are provided for DoD beneficiaries here are also available to VA beneficiaries under the most innovative, the most open arrangement in the country where we provide services for all of our combined beneficiaries."

"As a veteran myself and employee of the VA, I'm very excited about what we are ready to open today," said Dr. Christine Leyba, assistant director of mental health services at VANCHCS.

Instead of succumbing to the pressure of downsizing, the leadership of the 60th Medical Group and the VANCHCS recognized the need for a partnership in order to increase psychiatric treatment for active duty personnel, veterans and their families. In April of 2008, the Research and Development Corporation (also known as the RAND corp.) noted nearly 20 percent of military service members who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan -- 300,000 in all -- report symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder or major depression, yet only slightly more than half have sought treatment.

The design and construction of the new facility began in September 2008. "The journey has been long and sometimes arduous, but we've had really incredible results. This has actually been the truest cooperation between the VA and the Air Force that I've seen, and at all levels," Dr. Leyba exclaimed. "Leadership on both sides has been proactive and supportive as we've worked to bring this mental health unit to fruition. The Air Force team has been incredible to work with."

In addition to treatment of patients, the unit is designed to be an educational platform. Prior to its opening, DGMC trained five general clinical nurses to become psychiatric nurses, paving the way for the unit to become a psychiatric nurse certification center. The social worker residency class of 2010 will be the first to have an intensive psychiatric rotation in the new ward.

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### **Stereotactic Radiosurgery Gives New Hope for Brain Tumor Sufferers**

A new and promising treatment has been made available at Wright-Patterson Medical Center through the use of a Joint Incentive Fund (JIF), which provided a \$1.1 million grant for a joint project between DoD and VA. This treatment is called stereotactic radiosurgery, and it offers patients the hope of a cure and the prospect of a treatment from which they will suffer fewer, if any, side effects. Stereotactic radiosurgery is really not surgery at all, but rather a technique that allows the very precise delivery of a single high dose of radiation to the tumor without the potentially destructive effects that whole brain radiation therapy might bring to the surrounding brain tissue. Without a single incision or drop of blood, the tumor and its surrounding blood supply are destroyed with minimal dosage to the tissue surrounding the tumor. The treatment takes no more than an hour, and the patient is free to go home with four small needle-prick spots rather than an incision scar.

"I think the whole JIF program is a prototype of a sustainable future paradigm that will harvest the best that both DoD and VA facilities have to offer. It is the most exciting program that I have seen in my 22 year career," said Lt Col (Dr) Ronald Hale, Chief of Radiation Oncology and Cancer Program Chair at Wright-Patterson.

This treatment is just one of many made available at Wright-Patterson by the JIF grant, expanding the Center's already formidable arsenal of cancer treatments.

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### **VA Hosts Vegas Conference for Afghanistan/Iraq Veteran Transitional Care**

DoD is collaborating with VA, who will host a conference which highlights its methods for delivering top quality care to returning Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) troops on September 21 – 25, 2009 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The conference, called "Evolving Paradigms (EP) II: The Journey Home," is the continuation of 2007's Evolving Paradigms conference. Its purpose is to refine an integrated, nationwide system of post-combat care that is accessible, effective, efficient, and veteran-friendly for all those returning from Iraq or Afghanistan.

Representatives from VA's Veterans Health Administration (VHA), the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), DoD, and veterans' service organizations are set to attend along with roughly 1,800 clinicians and health care professionals from a variety of disciplines including mental health, case management, pain management, social work, communications, and veterans outreach.

The day's events will be organized by topic, offering attendees the opportunity to gain insight on the struggles of a wounded warrior from clinical, psychosocial and communications perspectives, among others. Registration for the conference is free. Topics addressed during the week will include mental health, post-deployment and readjustment issues, rehabilitation, community re-integration, and many more. The conference will provide learning opportunities for attendees to participate in exhibits, demonstrations, poster sessions, case studies and interactive, multi-disciplinary breakout sessions. Additionally, national VA, DoD, and community leaders will provide information on patient-centric services.

Additional information, to include the conference agenda, can be found at <http://www.evolvingparadigmsconference.com/9EP/index.asp>

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**For questions please contact the appropriate point of contact below.**

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If you have any good news stories and or accomplishments from your local teams, please send them to Maura Brady at [maura.brady.ctr@tma.osd.mil](mailto:maura.brady.ctr@tma.osd.mil) and your stories may be included in a future issue of the newsletter.

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