



Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs *Good News* February 2008



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.

Department of Defense/Department of Veterans Affairs Program Coordination Office Participates in 2008 Military Health System (MHS) Conference

The theme of the 2008 Military Health System (MHS) Conference was “*Caring for America’s Heroes*”. All of the DoD/VA Program Coordination Office (DVPCO) sessions addressed the many ways DoD and VA are working together to care for our service members and their families.

For information on the MHS Conference, please go to <http://www.health.mil/>. The following were DoD/VA-related sessions:

One Size Does Not Fit All Joint Ventures, Issues and Resolutions--Great Lakes/North Chicago and David Grant Medical Center (DGMC)/VA Northern California Health Care System

The first two break out sessions at the 2008 MHS Conference, entitled *One Size Does Not Fit All Joint Ventures, Issues and Resolutions*, highlighted the Joint Market Opportunities (JMO) work group and two separate and innovative partnerships in different parts of the country. Representatives from the local teams detailed their own unique ways of working together and solving problems.

Ms. Gail Sanftleben, the Deputy Director of the DVPCO talked about the mission of the JMO work group and their charge to identify best practices from sharing sites around the country. The JMO work group was chartered by the Joint Executive Committee to assess current and potential DoD/VA joint ventures.

Mr. Patrick Sullivan, the Director of the North Chicago VA Medical Center and CAPT Thomas McGue, Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes briefed on the lessons learned, plans, and challenges faced by both facilities. This partnership between DoD and VA will result in the first federal health care center, called the James Lovell Health Care Facility, scheduled to be completed in 2010. The seamless staff would allow a patient who could be a veteran, active duty service member, or family member to be treated by a Navy surgeon, a VA nurse, and a Navy technician. Mr. Sullivan and CAPT McGue stressed the importance of strategic planning for the future, leadership’s involvement and support, understanding the need to blend cultures from both organizations, and being patient centric throughout the entire process.

The David Grant Medical Center (DGMC) and the VA Northern California Health Care System (HCS) have over 14 years of experience in sharing. They have a robust sharing agreement with over 40 shared services. Col Lee Payne, Commander 60th Medical Group, and Ms. Laura Kelly, VISN 21 VA/DoD Liaison, echoed the sentiments of Mr. Sullivan and CAPT McGue when Col Payne stated that “the leadership success is based on how the top-down vision is executed.” DGMC and the VA Northern California HCS have several joint incentive fund projects that further enhance their sharing relationship and there are plans to develop proposals for a Cardiothoracic Program and a Joint Mental Health Unit. There is a good balance, and the staff is completely integrated to provide the best care to all beneficiaries with the emphasis being to operate as one team when caring for patients.

DoD/VA Joint Demonstration Site Projects: Goals and Accomplishments

Mr. Mike Carlisle and Ms. Pam Crarey, Demonstration Site Subgroup (DSS) Coordinators, presented an overview of the DoD/VA Joint Demonstration Site projects. The demonstration projects were mandated to conduct health care resources sharing projects to serve as a test for evaluating the feasibility, advantages and disadvantages of measures and programs designed to improve the sharing and coordination of health care and health care resources between the Departments. These demonstration projects officially ended September 30, 2007 and the lessons learned are being captured for future use.

The Senior Oversight Committee and the Link to the VA/DoD Joint Strategic Plan

Mr. Ken Cox, Director of the DVPCO and Mr. Hugh Scott, Program Analyst, Office of Policy and Planning, Department of Veterans Affairs presented an overview of the Senior Oversight Committee (SOC) and how it relates to the VA/DoD Joint Strategic Plan (JSP).

In its current “generation” the JSP has transformed into something much more relevant and useful. While maintaining previous generation’s framework, the current version is unique in that it incorporates the ability for a service member to transition between Departments. It also includes the recent feedback and recommendations from the different task forces and work groups such as the *Global War on Terror (GWOT) Report*, the President’s *Dole-Shalala Commission on Returning Wounded Warriors*, and the *Disability Benefits Commission*.

The 2008-2010 plan also has more concrete performance measures and actionable strategies and many of them link directly with the actions of the SOC, such as joint communications, improved case management, better information sharing, and collaborative training and continuing education for health care providers.

Providing Specialized Care: Responding to Requirements and A Hawaiian Collaboration

Michael E. Kilpatrick, M.D., DoD Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs provided an overview of the SOC’s plans to improve specialized care. He briefed the goals and objectives of coordinated transition and the Family Transition Initiative. The Family Transition Initiative was a joint project that evaluated the transition process for families of severely injured, inpatient service members who are transferring to VA Polytrauma Centers. The final recommendation of the Family Transition Initiative was for each major Military Treatment Facility and each VA Polytrauma Center to designate a DoD/VA clinical team to support severely injured service members and families.

COL Suzanne Martin, Tripler Army Medical Center (TAMC) and Ms. Marsha Graham, TAMC Chief, Medical Management, briefed the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Residential Rehabilitative Program (PRRP). The PRRP leveraged the existing cooperative relationship between VA and DoD in the area and was established under the existing Tripler/VA Joint Venture. VA provides residential treatment to United States Army Reserve soldiers with PTSD and DoD reimburses VA. A multidisciplinary, joint team has established joint processes to handle DoD patients during a 7.5 week residential program that helps soldiers and veterans to develop/practice new coping skills, integrate traumatic war related memories, participate in educational experiences and therapeutic group activities, and focus on physical and mental health. The program ends with a formal graduation ceremony, and so far there have been 57 graduates. The program is constantly evolving and improving, and surveys are given to participants after the program to collect lessons learned and feedback.

VA Hosts Symposium on Responding to the Needs of VA's Newest Generation of Combat Veterans

The Veterans Health Administration hosted a symposium on the accomplishments and challenges faced when providing care for the new generation of combat veterans. This symposium, held on February 19, 2008 at VA Corporate Offices, was attended by senior leadership from both DoD and VA. The topics addressed were closely aligned with the SOC's lines of action and included traumatic brain injury, the polytrauma system of care, DoD/VA data sharing, case management, and the evolution of the disability system. Dr. Michael Kussman, M.D., Under Secretary for Health and Dr. S. Ward Casscells, M.D., Assistant Secretary of Defense, Health Affairs both praised the progress made over the past year; encouraged participants to continue to identify what can be improved, and emphasized the need for even more collaboration and partnerships.

For questions please contact the appropriate point of contact below.

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Good News is published monthly. If you have any good news stories and or accomplishments from your local teams, please send them to Crystal Coleman at crystal.coleman.ctr@tma.osd.mil and your stories may be included in a future issue of the newsletter.

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