



**Department of Defense
and
Department of Veterans Affairs
Good News
October 2007**



Welcome to *Good News*. This is the first edition of the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) newsletter that will highlight the accomplishments and sharing activities at both the local and national levels.

Successful Air Force/VA Joint Incentive Fund Project

The 3rd Medical Group at Elmendorf Air Force Base (AFB) and the Veterans Administration Alaska Health Care System joined forces to reduce health care spending for diagnostic imaging procedures. They applied for, and received funding, under the DoD/VA Joint Incentive Fund program to hire additional staff to perform MRIs and CT scans in the evening hours at the Air Force facility. The result has been expanded capacity for VA patients and better utilization of DoD's equipment. They dramatically reduced the amount of MRIs and CT scans purchased in the private sector, and saved \$1.6 million in the first 16 months of operation, a return on investment of 3 to 1.

Navy Program Links Service Members to Careers and Community

Naval Medical Center San Diego recently opened the Balboa Career Transition Center. The Balboa Center is a joint effort involving the Department of Labor, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Navy; it falls under the REALifelines (Recovery & Employment Assistance Lifelines) initiative of the U.S. Department of Labor. Launched in 2004, REALifelines is meant to ensure combat wounded and injured Service members receive early intervention in their career and job search while on medical hold. It also links them to their local employment services in the nationwide network of One-Stop Career Centers. Full-time REALifelines personnel have been located at DoD facilities, including Military Medical Treatment Facilities (MTFs) to coordinate on the full array of employment and training services provided through the public workforce system. The total number of daily visits for the month of September 2007 was 290. These were visits by Service members to the Transition Center to review resumes, learn interview skills, conduct job searches, and get information on VA benefits.

Tracking Our Seriously Injured Service Members

Veterans Tracking Application (VTA) is a modified version of DoD's Joint Patient Tracking Application (JPTA). JPTA tracks the movement of medically evacuated Service members, from the theater of operation to MTFs. Some patients may also have clinical data in JPTA. VTA is a web-based patient tracking tool that assists in managing and tracking seriously injured Service

members from the battlefield through Landstuhl, Germany, to MTFs in the states, and on to VA medical facilities and regional offices. VTA provides near real-time patient tracking and in some cases medical information along with the ability of VHA and Veterans Benefits Association (VBA) staff to input data on active duty Service members as they move through the medical evacuation and care system and transition to veteran status. This additional information directly from the battlefield assists in coordinating the transition of healthcare to VA facilities and in processing claims for benefits. VA Liaisons stationed at ten MTFs now use this new tracking system to communicate the transfer of care of severely injured Service members to the Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom points of contact and case managers at the VAMCs or VA Regional Offices assuming care or responsibility of the Service member or veteran.

Inpatient Clinical Data Sharing

In the Puget Sound region, interaction across VA and DoD healthcare facilities was increased after a 2004 agreement by which Madigan Army Medical Center (MAMC) provides 15 inpatient beds and all associated inpatient care for the American Lake Division of the VA Puget Sound Health Care System (VAPHCS). Madigan and Puget Sound VAHCS have also successfully participated in a medical information and information technology demonstration project. The project enabled the sharing of clinical inpatient data between VA and DoD using the Bidirectional Health Information Exchange (BHIE). Because veteran patients are typically medically complex, MAMC clinicians require access to prior medical records contained in the VA Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS). As follow-up treatment is usually performed at VAPHCS, it is equally imperative that VA clinicians have access to documentation associated with care provided by MAMC. In addition to the patient care provided through this sharing agreement, many Puget Sound active duty personnel (DoD patients) are treated at VA facilities, further increasing the need for clinical information exchange across these two organizations.

VA/DoD Joint Strategic Plan

Recent updates to the VA/DoD Joint Strategic Plan incorporate the recommendations from several different commissions and task forces and focus even more on the seamless transition of care and the sharing of electronic medical records. New strategies and goals cover topics such as the establishment of the Federal Recovery Coordinator Program and the effectiveness and efficiency of VA access to the electronic health data on separating and separated Service members. The Federal Recovery Coordinator Program is designed to provide prompt clinical and non-clinical case management to Service members and their families. The medical information sharing strategies will continue to focus on VA and DoD access to electronic health information on shared patients. For more information on the Joint Strategic Plan, see the DoD/VA Program Coordination Office website at <http://www.tricare.mil/DVPCO/default.cfm>.

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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