

Annual Report 2002

Southern Arizona VA Health Care System
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Southern Arizona VA
Health Care System

Tucson • Casa Grande • Green Valley
Sierra Vista • Safford • Yuma

A VISN 18 Facility



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- Increase the number of volunteers by 15 percent and the diversity of volunteer assignments.
- Recruit and provide start-up funding for young research investigators.
- Renovate and expand Gastroenterology/GI/Pulmonary/Special Procedures on the first floor, Building 38.
- Establish research partnerships with outside industry.
- Enhance research collaboration with new Diagnostic Molecular Laboratory.
- Develop plans for two Tucson CBOCs in the northwest and eastside areas.
- Renovate and relocate space for Cardiology on the first floor, Building 38.
- Expand voice recognition system beyond Radiology.
- Increase security on campus.
- Reorganize acute care nursing staff.
- Continue expansion of mental health services to the CBOCs.
- Backfill space vacated by Building 50, by expanding the Life Support Unit (LSU).
- Activate Ward 3 North.
- Begin renovation of Ambulatory Surgery and Surgical Clinics, second floor, Building 50.
- The VA's CARES (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) Program, which began this fiscal year, is designed to prepare our system for meeting veterans needs in this new century. Planning is underway for realigning facilities and services across the country, with timeframes for completion extending as far out as 2022. SAVAHCS has been identified for expansions in outpatient facilities and research space, as well as certain program expansions. Thus, in FY03 we will begin planning for (a) two CBOCs in the Tucson metropolitan area, (b) the renovation of existing research buildings and additional research space, and (c) renovation of specialty outpatient space.



The Southern Arizona VA Health Care System enjoyed another busy, challenging and successful year in FY02. I am so proud of our organization! As I never tire of saying, our success could not be possible without the tireless efforts of our wonderful employees - both paid and volunteer.

There are many different program areas in which we measure our success, and enclosed within this Annual Report you will have the opportunity to see many of the accomplishments we are most proud of.

As Director, I am responsible for ensuring that SAVAHCS satisfies over two hundred different performance measures. As you might imagine, this is a formidable task. To make matters even more challenging in the future, the President wants agency budgets tied to their ability to meet performance goals. Of those many measures we are expected to satisfy, some of the ones I track more closely than others have to do with access to care, quality of care, patient satisfaction and efficiency.

As one measure of access, SAVAHCS treated nearly 11 percent more veterans in FY02 than in FY01; this increase is higher than both the VISN and National averages. There are

numerous indicators of success in the area of quality care and, for the most part, SAVAHCS is doing very well; however, we have some challenges in FY03 that I am sure we will be successful in meeting. Our patient satisfaction scores continued to be on the high end of VA results nationally and, as for providing care efficiently, in FY02 we provided care for a lower cost than any other facility in our VISN, and had similarly lower costs than the VA's national average. All in all, we have achieved an enviable performance record in the VA system, and for that, we should all be proud. Because our future budgets may well depend on our ability to meet performance expectations, we cannot rest on our past record. We must ensure that we continue to meet, or exceed, the ever-increasing expectations that our patients and agency demands.

I look forward to FY03, our 75th Anniversary Year of providing health care to veterans in southern Arizona, with excitement, and every expectation that we will carry our record of continuous improvement and achievement into this new year.

Jonathan H. Gardner, FACHE
Director

As we begin the celebration of our 75th anniversary providing health care to veterans living in southern Arizona, we thought it would be interesting to look back at our beginning.

The end of World War I brought a surge of returning veterans suffering from debilitating respiratory illnesses, particularly tuberculosis and symptoms of poison gas exposure. Drawn by the curative effects of the desert climate, thousands of sick and destitute veterans migrated to Tucson and lived in a squalid area known as Tentville. Community concern for their plight grew, which helped spur the then United States War Department to build Public Health Hospital Number 51 at the site of the former recreational space known as Pastime Park.

The facility was temporary, however, so Tucson civic and business leaders sought additional public and private support for a more permanent home for the hospital. Their efforts culminated in Congressional funding as well as Albert Steinfeld's land donation on the city's south side. The present SAVAHCS facility opened its doors in August 1928.

During this coming year, there will be many opportunities for our staff and the public to learn more about our history. We hope you will join us in this exploration and celebration.

Quadrad



Jonathan H. Gardner, FACHE
Director



Jayendra H. Shah, MD
Chief of Staff



Debra Hirschman, RN
Associate Director



Spencer Ralston
Associate Director



Lonnie Siebrandt
Chief, Business
Service Line



Debra Hirschman, RN
Chief, Clinical Care
Support Service Line



Ronald B. Schifman, MD
Chief, Diagnostics
Service Line



Q. Scott Ringenberg, MD
Chief, Education, Information & Performance
Management Service Line



Martin Sjursen, Chief
Facilities Management
Service Line



Mary Walters, RN
Chief, Geriatrics and
Rehabilitation Care Line



Richard Robbins, MD
Chief, Research
Service Line



Fabia Kwiecinski, MD
Chief, Medicine &
Primary Care Line



David Emelty, MD
Chief, Mental Health Care Line



Spencer Ralston
Chief, Resources
Management
Service Line



Thomas Scott, MD
Acting Chief, Surgical
Care Line



Kathy Hay, RN



Mary Kaye Pierce, RN



Alice Mourelatos, LPN



Carla Parkinson, CNA



Steven Goldman, MD



Anthony Bavery, MD



Gearald Klein



Victor Rivera



Marlene Lasko, LPN

Care/Service
Line Chiefs

The SAVAHCS is organized into eleven care and service lines, which provide an effective approach to strategic and operational management.

Line Chiefs are responsible for SAVAHCS' programs and serve as advisors to the Quadrad through their participation on key boards and committees.

Kathy Hay, RN
Secretary's Excellence in Nursing Award (RN)) Surgical Care Line

Mary Kaye Pierce, RNC, NP
Secretary's Excellence in Nursing Award (NP) Medicine and Primary Care Line

Alice Mourelatos, LPN
Secretary's Excellence in Nursing Award (LPN) Geriatrics & Rehabilitation Care Line

Carla Parkinson, CNA
Secretary's Excellence in Nursing Award (NA) Surgical Care Line

Steven Goldman, MD
Clinician of the Year
Medicine and Primary Care Line

Anthony A. Bavery, MD
Resident of the Year
Medicine and
Primary Care Line

Gearald Klein
Employee of the Year-2001
Business Service Line

Victor Rivera
Hands and Heart Award
Diagnostics Care Line

Marlene Lasko, LPN
Helping Hands Award
Medicine and
Primary Care Line



October 2001
Arsenio Delgado
Surgical Care Line

November 2001
Frank Hutcherson
Facilities Management
Service Line

December 2001
Barbara Cunningham
Surgical Care Line

January 2002
Willie Handy
Facilities Management
Service Line

February 2002
Christine Barreuther
Clinical Care Support
Service Line

March 2002
Debbie Stephens
Medicine and Primary
Care Line

April 2002
Brian Latimer
Business Service Line

May 2002
Shon Lowry
Geriatrics &
Rehabilitation Care Line

June 2002
Gini Hoopes
Business Service Line

July 2002
Selma Lopez
Surgical Care Line

August 2002
William Wilhelm
Diagnostics Service Line

September 2002
Christina De Los Santos
Clinical Care Support
Service Line

Mission: We provide quality health care to veterans in an environment of compassion, education, and research.

Vision: Be a model of clinical and organizational excellence

Values: Trust, respect, commitment, compassion and excellence.

Clinical Improvements

National Recognition



- Successfully implemented all facets of the electronic medical record.
- Fully implemented Vista-Rad, a system that provides a mechanism to capture and store digital images, which can then be seen using image viewing software, at numerous viewing stations located strategically throughout the medical center.
- According to a 90 day follow-up survey of patients discharged from the Geriatric Rehabilitation Center's (GRC) inpatient rehab program:
 - 98% of patients are able to live at home, compared to 90% of similar community patients.
 - 87% of patients were not re-hospitalized, compared to 81% of the community patients.
 - 94% of patients could care for themselves, compared to 90% of community patients.
- SAVAHCS hosted a community "Stand Down" for the homeless.
- Established Tucson's first comprehensive Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory in conjunction with the Department of Pathology at the Arizona Health Sciences Center, which will enhance the early diagnosis of infections, cancers and other diseases.

- Achieved 3-year Council on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) accreditation for SouthWestern Blind Rehabilitation Center.
- Achieved full Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (JCAHO) accreditation for:
 - Hospital
 - Long Term Care
 - Home Care
 - Behavioral Health
 - Ambulatory Care
- The Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) program was designated a Program of Excellence by Veterans Health Administration.
- The Geriatrics Evaluation and Management (GEM) program received renewed designation as a Program of Excellence for the next two years.
- The Agave Primary Care Team was noted as a "Best Practice" by JCAHO during the 2002 survey.

Patient Satisfaction

The following chart shows how patients rated their outpatient clinic visits during the last two years. It also compares SAVAHCS' scores to the national VHA average. A higher score indicates a more positive response.

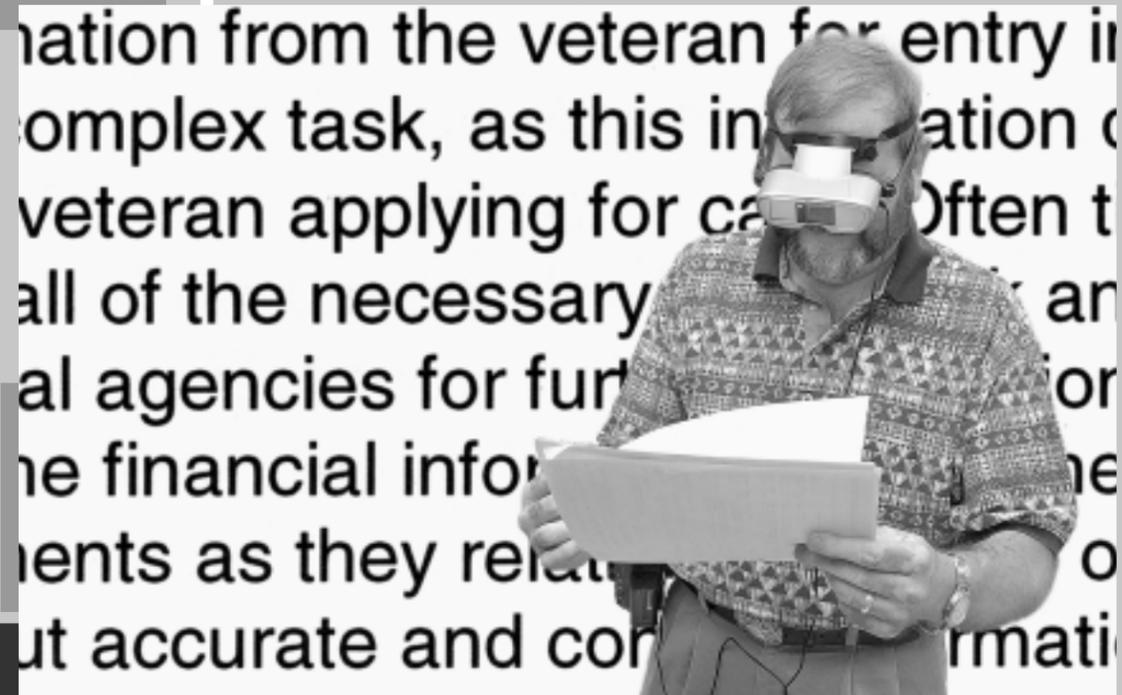
Question	Answer(s) included in score	SAVAHCS	VISN 18	All VHA
Were you able to get this (most recent) clinic appointment as soon as you wanted?	Yes	76.4%	76.4%	76%
How long after your most recent appointment was scheduled to begin did you wait to be seen?	Less than 30 minutes	90%	85.4%	82%
Overall, how would you rate the quality of care you received during the past two months?	Good Very good Excellent	95%	92%	92%
Did you know what the next step in your care would be ?	Yes, Always	87.6%	87.6%	87.9%
If you could have free care outside the VA, would you choose to come here again?	Probably would Definitely would	53%	49.4%	48.4%
All things considered, how satisfied are you with your health care in the VA?	Completely satisfied Very satisfied Somewhat satisfied	87%	84.5%	83%

Highlights from the "2002 Outpatient Survey of Health Care Experiences of Patients".

- VISN 18 average scores were higher than the national average (more satisfied) in all 13 categories of customer service.
- SAVAHCS average scores were higher in 11 of the 13 categories when compared to the national average.
- SAVAHCS scored highest of all the VISN 18 facilities in five categories:
 - Courtesy
 - Patient Education
 - Emotional Support
 - Mail Out Pharmacy
 - Health Care Preferences
- SAVAHCS satisfaction scores in Primary Care exceeded all other facilities in VISN 18.



- New dialysis machines improved care to our dialysis patients.
- Instituted new inpatient blood collection/lab testing schedule to speed lab test turn-around time.
- Began enhancement of mental health services in our Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). A full-time social worker in the Yuma clinic and part-time mental health providers in our Green Valley and Casa Grande clinics are already in place.
- New fluoroscopy units were installed to provide state-of-the-art capability in treatment of kidney, ureter and bladder conditions.
- Expanded the Geriatric NeuroPsychiatry Unit by seven beds and created additional recreation space.
- X-rays performed at the West Texas VA Health Care System are sent electronically to SAVAHCS for interpretation by our radiologists. Use of this technology (VistaRad) provides patients at Big Spring with the same level and quality of professional expertise available to our patients.
- Reduced waiting time to 30 minutes at the Outpatient Pharmacy window.



- Procured state-of-the-art mechanical ventilators for the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).
- The Evaluation and Brief Treatment PTSD Unit (EBTPU) was fully implemented on our inpatient psychiatric unit.
- Implemented voice recognition for radiology reporting, eliminating the need for transcription services. Using this system, radiologists' reports are rapidly available to clinicians soon after the x-ray study is completed.
- The SouthWestern Blind Rehabilitation Center (SWBRC) became the first VA Blind Rehabilitation Center to offer an Electronic Optical Enhancement Device training (EOED) program. *(pictured above)*
- Fully implemented Agave Mental Health Primary Care to provide an integrated approach to health care for patients with mental health care needs.
- Developed an electronic phlebotomy patient check-in process for implementation in FY03.
- Expanded the dental implant program.



- Continued construction of the 83,000 square foot two-story Ambulatory Care Addition (ACA). Activation is anticipated in July 2003.
- Completed the renovation of the Prosthetics Treatment Center.
- Initiated the expansion of the Audiology treatment and testing area.
- Completed addition to Dementia Care Unit in Building 60.
- Renovated inpatient Ward 3 North, to replace large multi-patient rooms with semi-private rooms. Activation is scheduled for April 2003.
- Designed Ambulatory Surgery Center to occupy the second floor of Building 57. Construction will begin in the 4th Quarter of 2003.
- Renovation of all six main operating rooms was completed.
- Designed expanded Life Support Unit (LSU) to backfill Building 50 after the activation of the ACA.

- Selected as a VISN 18 Referral Center for Cardiology Services, SAVAHCS performed 230 open heart cases.
- Decreased the average waiting times in Telephone Linked Care (TLC) from 140 seconds to 27 seconds.
- Identified root causes of potential Bar Code Medication Administration (BCMA) system failure, which resulted in:
 - Improved methodology for insulin administration.
 - Procedure to reduce interruptions of nurses during medication administration.
- Initiated Telepsychiatry in four of our five CBOCs which allows psychiatrists at the Tucson campus to treat patients at the outlying areas via a live television link.
- Radio-frequency ablation initiated for the treatment of otherwise inoperable tumors.
- Addition of laparoscopic instrumentation for the repair of hernias.
- Expanded endovascular procedures for the treatment of complex arterial blockages.
- Evaluated and obtained fall prevention equipment which resulted in fewer falls with major injury.

Education Achievements



- SAVAHCS partnered with the AZ Center on Aging, the University of Arizona, and Arizona State University to create an Arizona Geriatric Education Center.
- Appointed an Associate Director of the Intern Medicine Program who works in collaboration with the University of Arizona to enhance the quality of education to our trainees.
- SAVAHCS maintained affiliations with over 80 academic institutions throughout the United States.
- Patient safety is an education priority; eighty five percent of the frontline staff completed more than the required hours.
- To prepare our staff to handle potential terrorism acts, three new courses were developed: Bioterrorism - Awareness and Preparedness, Chemical Terrorism, and Decontamination Shelter Assembly.
- SAVHACS sponsored seven Valor students. Valor Program has become the community standard for summer externs. These positions are highly sought after by all nursing students.
- Four employees completed the Network Leadership Development Institute. These LDI graduates have made a significant impact on the organization through their work in customer service programs.
- 50 percent of our supervisory staff have completed mentoring training.
- Seventeen staff members were selected for the SAVAHCS Leadership Development Program (LDP) to develop potential leaders to meet our future needs.

Disabled American Veterans and Auxiliary, Chapter 2 collaborated to recognize our veteran patients and the difference they have made in our lives as Americans. One hundred and fifty veteran patients benefited from a beautiful recognition ceremony and a generous luncheon. Gifts were also distributed to all 190 hospitalized veterans!

- The Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) program and the VAVS Committee collaborated to send three veteran SCI patients to the 2002 National Wheel Chair Games. Funds were raised by the VAVS Committee to send the athletes to the competition in Cleveland, Ohio. The athletes competed in events such as swimming, track and field, rugby, and basketball. All three athletes returned with gold, silver and bronze medals.
- Volunteers from veteran and community organizations participated in a number of special activities to include the holiday gift shop and tree decorating, the Adopt-A-Ward program, the Veterans Creative Arts Competition, the National Wheelchair Games and Make A Difference Day.
- SAVAHCS hosted over 30 Pima County court community service volunteers each weekend during FY02. These volunteers have logged in 34,409 hours of landscaping and grounds keeping assistance since the program began in 1997.
- The United States Navy Reserve Sea Bee Detachment 0717 continued to give of their time and resources with ongoing security fencing projects during FY01.
- Employees and volunteers alike once again opened their hearts and wallets to support Operation Warmheart, providing gifts to 524 Tucson children and 15 families for the holiday.

Community Involvement and Volunteer Activities

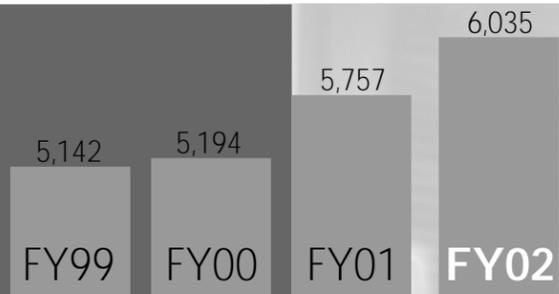


- Over 850 SAVAHCS volunteers donated 148,682 hours of their time to veteran patient programs.
- Volunteer escorts provided a critical service to the medical center by transporting medically stable patients, labs, prescriptions and medical records to various areas of the facility. In FY02, the volunteer escorts made 91,568 transports, saving staff 22,892 hours to devote towards the direct care of veterans.
- Veterans Administration Voluntary Service (VAVS) continued to provide hospitalized patients with a superior recreation program. These activities, coordinated through Voluntary Service and community organizations, include holiday parties, bingo, crafts, live entertainment, movies, and picnics. Outings for fishing, dinners, bowling, field trips, and sports activities are also organized.
- On a weekly basis Pets for Vets volunteers (volunteer handlers and their trained dogs) visit SAVAHCS patients. The therapeutic and soothing effects of the volunteers and their pets contribute to the physical and mental health of our patients. This year the Pets for Vets program expanded and in addition to serving the Geriatric Rehabilitative Center they are visiting patients in four new areas of the medical center: psychiatric inpatient unit, PTSD, outpatient pharmacy and the Patient Advocate waiting room.
- On national Make A Difference Day, Golden Eagle Distributors and the

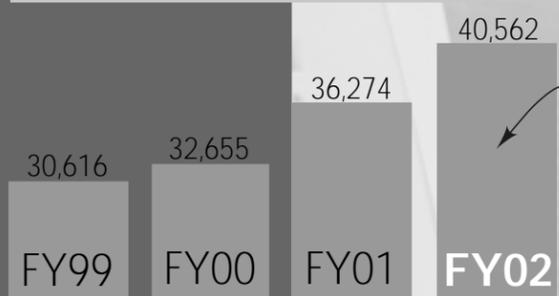
Research Achievements



- 187 separate research projects were conducted in FY02.
- Research funding increased from \$4.1 million in FY01 to \$4.4 million in FY02.
- SAVAHCS Diabetic Foot Research Group wins the prestigious William E. Stickel Award for Excellence in Lower Extremity Research.
- Dr. Richard A. Robbins was awarded a four-year grant to study noninvasive techniques to assess lung response to tobacco smoke by the Flight Attendants Medical Research Institute (FAMRI).
- Nursing Grant to Fund Heart Attack Study was awarded to Shu-Fen Wung, Ph.D. Dr. Steven Goldman is a collaborator on this \$1.73 million, four-year federal grant.
- Dr. Steven Goldman's Study "Radial Artery vs. Saphenous Vein in Coronary Artery Bypass Grafts" was funded. The \$20,156 funding began the 4th Quarter of FY02.
- Dr. David Armstrong was unanimously elected to the National Board of Directors of the American Diabetes Association (ADA).
- Dr. Ronnie Fass was elected to the editorial board of the American Journal of Gastroenterology.
- Established Research Author Day. Research Service had 93 publications from October 1, 2001 through September 30, 2002.
- Biomedical Research Foundation of Southern Arizona (BRFSA) became United Way recipient.

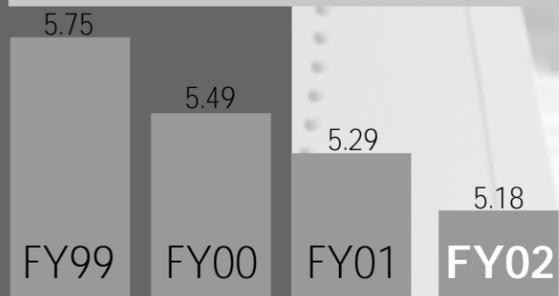


ACUTE INPATIENTS DISCHARGED

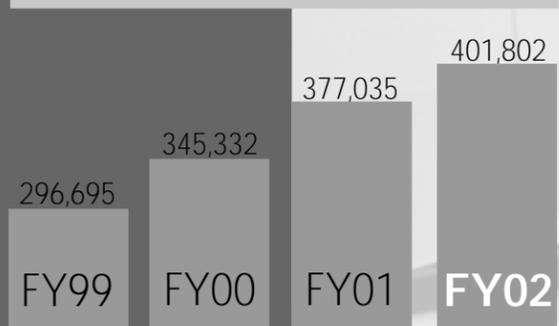


UNIQUE PATIENTS TREATED

33 percent increase in the number of patients treated in the last three years!



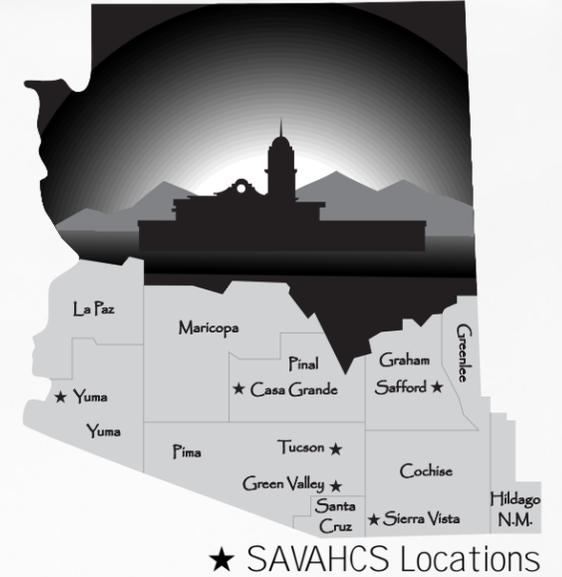
INPATIENT AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY (DAYS)



OUTPATIENT VISITS

Location	Cost/Veteran FY02
NATIONAL VA AVERAGE	\$3,474
VISN 18	\$3,000
ALBUQUERQUE	\$3,269
AMARILLO	\$3,027
BIG SPRING	\$3,053
EL PASO	\$2,951
PHOENIX	\$2,978
PRESCOTT	\$2,864
TUCSON	\$2,786

COST/VETERAN FY02



This means that Tucson provides high quality health care at a lower cost to the taxpayer... which means we can care for more veterans with our dollars!