

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**VA Uses Technology to Provide Rural Veterans Greater Access to Specialty Care Services**

*Demonstration Scheduled for July 11, 10 a.m. at VA Central Office*

WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has implemented a new initiative, Specialty Care Access Network-Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (SCAN-ECHO), to increase access to specialty care services for Veterans in rural and medically under-served areas through the use of videoconferencing equipment.

“We are committed to providing increased access to high-quality health care to Veterans regardless of where they live,” said Secretary Eric K. Shinseki. “Through SCAN-ECHO, patients in rural areas with complex medical conditions are now able to receive specialty care treatment from their local VA physician.”

SCAN-ECHO is modeled after an outreach program developed by the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center’s Project ECHO. SCAN-ECHO enables specialty care teams in areas such as diabetes, pain management, and Hepatitis C to use videoconferencing equipment to connect with Veterans’ local primary care providers (PCPs) and Patient Aligned Care Teams. During a scheduled SCAN-ECHO clinic, the PCP presents a patient’s case and the specialty care team recommends a treatment plan. In addition to case presentations, formal clinical education is also provided.

VA will host a demonstration of the SCAN-ECHO technology at VA Central Office, room 230, on July 11 from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

This year, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), established a collaborative agreement with the Project ECHO program to educate and provide training materials to VHA staff. In addition, Project ECHO staff will be available for consultation as VHA’s program continues to expand and new Centers are added.

Eleven VA medical facilities currently serve as SCAN-ECHO Centers: VA Connecticut Healthcare System, West Haven, Conn.; VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, Penn.; Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center, Richmond, Va.; Salem VA Medical Center, Salem, Va.; Louis Stokes VA Medical Center, Cleveland, Ohio; VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System, Ann Arbor, Mich.; New Mexico VA Healthcare System, Albuquerque, N.M.; VA Eastern Colorado Healthcare System, Denver, Colo.; Portland VA Medical Center, Portland, Ore.; San Francisco VA Medical Center; and Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 22 (services split between VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System and VA San Diego Healthcare System).

These centers are piloting the original model as developed by Project ECHO and adapting it to the VHA. The program is currently being evaluated to assure that Veterans are experiencing improved access to care prior to a system wide expansion.

To date, 35 teams in 14 different specialties have been formed as of May, with 150 sessions held and a total of 690 consults completed.

One of Secretary Shinseki’s top three priorities is increasing access to VA care and services for Veterans wherever they live. VA is expanding access in a three-pronged effort that includes facilities, programs and technology.

VA operates one of the nation’s largest integrated health care systems in the country. With a health care budget of about $50 billion, VA expects to provide care to 6.1 million patients during 920,000 hospitalizations and nearly 80 million outpatient visits this year. VA’s health care network includes 152 major medical centers and more than 800 community-based outpatient clinics.

Project ECHO is funded in part by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, a philanthropic organization dedicated to improving health and health care for Americans.

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