

Pittsburgh Healthcare System

Heinz ★ Highland Drive ★ University Drive

Working Together

Issue Ten

Spring/Summer 2002

worldclasscarejustforveterans



A Message from the Director



**Dear Fellow Employees, Volunteers,
Veterans and Friends of the VA,**

In this Spring/Summer Issue of Working Together, I would like to highlight the many outstanding accomplishments we have made in FY 2002. First and foremost, we continued to expand our clinical programs and improved access and patient satisfaction, while we continued in pursuit of our goal to provide the highest quality of care that can be found in any health care system. The following are a few of the most notable achievements we have made in the past year:



Glenn Hangard

➤ The VAPHS was designated as a National Renal Transplant Center. The first Transplant was successfully performed from a live donor, the veteran's son, in May 2002.

- Our Women Veteran's Health Program and Renal Dialysis Programs were re-certified as National Clinical Centers of Excellence by the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- The VAPHS awarded and opened two new Community based primary care centers in Aliquippa, PA and Greensburg, PA under a new contract provider. The newly opened clinics are veteran only clinics and are showing improved patient satisfaction and an expanded number of veterans seen.
- We implemented the electronics consult package, within the VAPHS and our four spoke hospitals in Butler, Altoona, Erie and Clarksburg, WV.
- Opened newly renovated canteens at the University Drive and Highland Drive Divisions.
- Completed the renovations to the lab at the University Drive Division.

Our operating strategic plan also includes numerous renovation and construction projects that are currently in process and a substantial investment in information technology and high tech equipment. Updates on these initiatives and our strategic plan for 2003 will be published in the Fall issue of this publication.

This Spring/Summer issue of **Working Together** will present a feature on JCAHO readiness, re-certification of the Women's Veterans Health Program and Renal Dialysis Program as National Clinical Centers of Excellence, Volunteer Recognition Week and spotlights on the recently appointed Associate Director for Patient Care Services, Associate Chief of Staff and Associate Chief of Staff for Research, and our "Performance Vital Signs."

Michael E. Moreland
Director, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System



Michael E. Moreland
Director

Rajiv Jain, MD
Chief of Staff

Terry Gerigk
Associate Director

Ira Richmond
Associate Director for
Patient Care Services

The VA Pittsburgh Working Together

is published for the employees, volunteers, patients and friends of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. To submit articles, editorials, letters or story ideas for possible inclusion, please contact *David Cowgill* at **412-688-6224**

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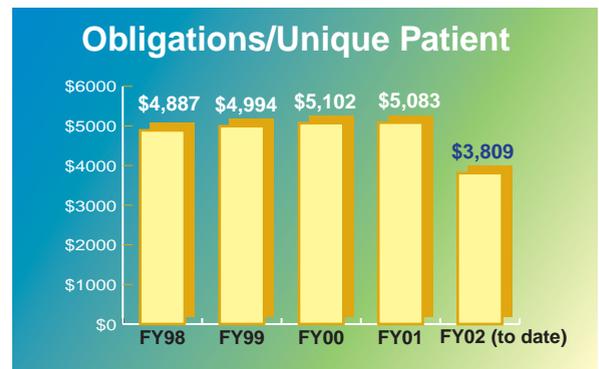
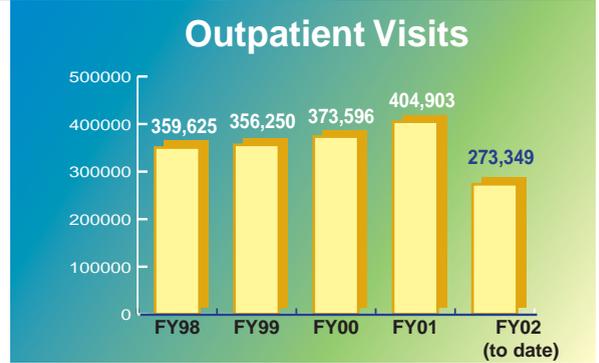
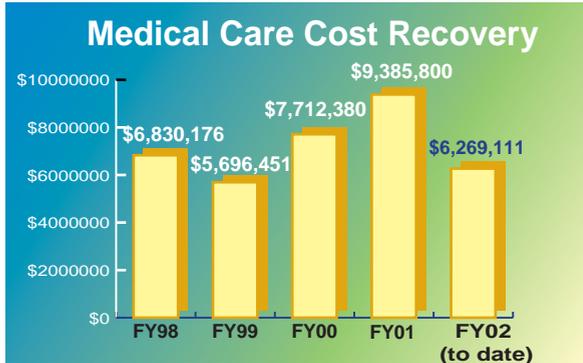
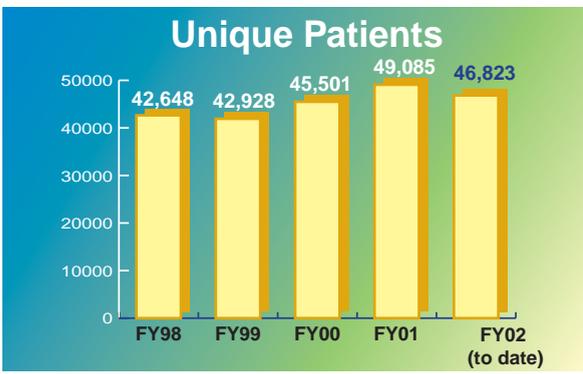
Design & Layout
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Warren Park
Glenn Hangard

Cover photo by *Glenn Hangard*

VAPHS primary care physician,
Erika Hoffman, M.D. with
veteran patient, *Baylor Spratt.*

Performance Vital Signs



The measure for clinical quality has changed. Rather than a percentage score for performance on the prevention index, each VA is rated as not met, fully successful, or exceptional. VA Pittsburgh's performance on these measures is shown in the Performance data chart, which will replace the Prevention Index chart in future issues.

Performance Data		
FY02	Prevention Index	Clinical Practice Guidelines
1 st qtr	Fully successful	Exceptional in 4 of 4 measures
2 nd qtr	Exceptional	Exceptional in 3 of 4 measures

Spotlight On New Associate Director for Patient Care Services

**Ira
Richmond**



Warren Park

Ms. Ira Richmond joined the staff of the VA Pittsburgh Health-care System in March 2002 and serves as the Associate Director for Patient Care Services. Ms. Richmond previously served as the Associate Director for Patient Care Services at the VA Illiana Healthcare System in Danville, Illinois and the Associate Chief Nurse for Medicine and Surgery at the VA Western New York Healthcare System in Buffalo. She began her VA career in 1975 as a Staff Nurse at the medical center in Memphis, Tennessee. She also served as a Major in the Army Nurse Corp (Reserves) from 1984-2002. Ms. Richmond has an Associate Degree in Nursing from Memphis State University, a BSN and MS degree in Nursing from the University of Tennessee. She is certified by the American Nurses Credentialing Center in Nursing Administration, Advanced and also as a Clinical Specialist in Adult Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing. She is a year 2000 graduate of the Johnson & Johnson – University of Pennsylvania Wharton Fellows Program in Management for

Nurse Executives. Ms. Richmond currently serves on the Nursing Administration Advisory Board at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Nursing. She is a member of Sigma Theta Tau, the American Organization for Nurse Executives, the American College of Healthcare Executives, and the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs.

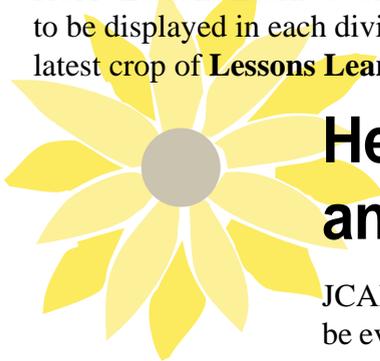
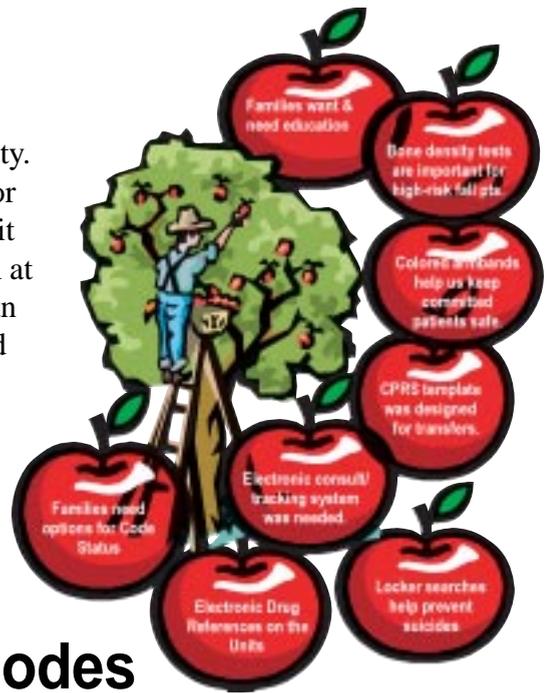
From...

the Office of Quality & Patient Safety

Root Cause Analysis (RCA)

RCA represents one way the VAPHS has planted a Culture of Safety. RCA is a process that identifies the most basic reason a problem or adverse event occurred. The RCA identifies what happened, why it happened, and how we can prevent the event from reoccurring OR at least how we reduce the risk or severity of a reoccurrence. When an RCA is complete, it provides the facility with seeds for change and reduces opportunities for bad outcomes.

Leadership at VAPHS is very involved in the RCA process and strives to ensure a credible and effective process. You can see the RCA “Lessons Learned” on the **Patient Safety Apple Tree** soon to be displayed in each division. Please take time to review our latest crop of **Lessons Learned!**



Healthcare Failure Modes and Effects Analysis (HFMEA)

JCAHO requires organizations to identify at least one high risk process annually to be evaluated by a HFMEA. The HFMEA is to be a proactive process that identifies areas where systems or processes can break down and where patient care could potentially be compromised. The process challenges us to look at these vulnerable areas and correct them before a problem occurs.

A workgroup at the VAPHS recently applied the HFMEA process to Bar Code Medication Administration (BCMA). The focus of the review was to address the data that “goes in” and “comes out” of BCMA. More specifically, to look at what we could do if a failure occurred—how we could prevent negative outcomes in providing medications.

Thanks to the findings in the HFMEA, a contingency plan will be published soon for BCMA!

JCAHO Survey
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
October 2002—
(No definite date yet)

Performance Improvement

Performance Improvement was a topic of discussion during the Mock Surveys! JCAHO wants to hear from the staff what they are doing to improve performance. All staff must be able to individually answer these questions... What are you doing to make your work area more safe for patients? How is the VAPHS improving the quality of patient care? How is the clinic staff decreasing the time a patient waits for an appointment? What are you doing to make our veterans and their families more pleased with our services?

Performance Improvement activities are shown in many ways, but perhaps most clearly through Technical Quality Presentation Displays. You can learn a lot about what the staff at the VAPHS is doing to improve performance through these displays, which use the format of:

Understand.....Analyze.....Improve

LOOK near the cafeterias—Nutrition has displayed improvements!

LOOK in the Pulmonary Lab—their improvements are there!

LOOK at the nursing units—They have PI Bulletin Boards!

LOOK at your area—What have you improved? What can you display? What are you proud of?

VA Pittsburgh Staff works together with ...

to make the VAPHS a safer place for the veterans we serve

Spotlight On

New Associate Chief of Staff, Vice President Clinical Support

Mona Melhem, MD



Dr. Mona Melhem was appointed as the Associate Chief of Staff and Vice President of the Clinical Support Service Line in November 2001. She joined the staff of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System in July 1986. Her previous positions at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System include Chief of Hematology and Staff Pathologist. Dr. Melhem began her VA career as a Research Associate in the Career Development Program at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. She earned her M.D. degree from Cairo University in Egypt and has certifications from the American Board of Pathology in Anatomic & Clinical Pathology and a Special Qualification in Hematology. Dr. Melhem serves as a Professor in the Department of Pathology at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Medicine. She is a member of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Association for Cancer Research, and the International Academy of Pathologists. She also serves as a Girl Scout Leader for the Girl Scouts of Southwestern PA. Dr. Melhem and her husband have two children.

Warren Park

Congratulations Clinical Programs of Excellence



Glenn Hangard

The VAPHS was honored to be one of the recipients of the first VHA Clinical Center of Excellence in Women's Health designation, and we are very proud to be named again in 2002. Over the past two years, this program exceeded its goals in consistent, quality healthcare to women veterans. Our program continues to strive to provide new initiatives in health care delivery, education, and research in an effort to ensure patient satisfaction, high quality care, and cost effective management.

The Dialysis Unit at VAPHS has been designated as a national Clinical Program of Excellence for 2001 by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Under Secretary of Health. They were judged as among the finest in American Healthcare through a rigorous peer evaluation process. The Dialysis Program was evaluated for excellence in areas such as clinical outcomes, patient focus, financial effectiveness and productivity, and had to meet stringent criteria in order to receive the 2 year Clinical Program of Excellence designation. The Dialysis Unit has been a recipient of this award for the past three consecutive time frames within the VA system.



Warren Park

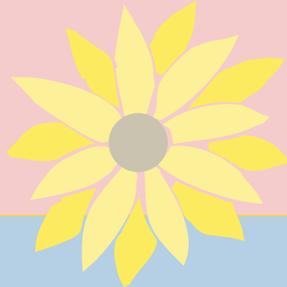
Mr. Michael Moreland
Director
Pittsburgh Healthcare System
Pittsburgh, PA 15240

Dear Mike,

Thanks you for the letters you provided me referencing care being provided by your staff in the Pittsburgh Healthcare System. So often negative feedback is the only feedback received and it is wonderful to hear the positive feedback your staff receives from veterans and their families regarding health care.

VA's mission of providing the best possible care and assistance to our veteran patients could not be accomplished without the professionalism and dedication of your employees. Their continued commitment to our Nation's veterans is to be commended. Please pass on my thanks to your entire staff for representing VA so well.

Sincerely,
Nora E. Egan
Chief of Staff
Office of the Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs



Dear Director,

I would like to take this opportunity to show my sincere appreciation for the many things that have been provided to me by the VA. First of all, the portable wheelchair ramp has made my life much easier as far as access to my home. The stair glide has been a godsend allowing me access to the family room in the basement of my home. Also, the grab bars and shower chair have allowed me to care for myself. The railing that was installed in my hallway has greatly assisted with my therapy. Also, the vehicle grant has helped me purchase a vehicle that is accessible to me. The personnel that I have dealt with have treated me with respect. Mr. McKowan from Accessible Home Automations, who came to install the various equipment in my home, was very professional as well as knowledgeable as to the proper placement and use of the equipment. The prosthetics department has always acted in a professional manner as well. Thank you again for everything.

Sincerely
Tino A Yaccich

James R. Johnson, Librarian
VAPHS, Delafield Road, Pgh, PA

Dear Jim,

Please excuse the informality but I feel as if I know you because my mother, Millie Clasper, has spoken of you so often. The volunteer work meant so much to her. Because of its importance to her, we were very surprised when she gave it up - and we had a sense that something had happened to cause her to do it so abruptly. We felt that you were perhaps aware that something wasn't quite right with her and none of us was exactly sure what was happening.

She walked down the aisle on the arm of my youngest son when my oldest son was married January 27, 2002, less than three weeks after you and Mr. Tomayko wrote the lovely letter. She gave me my copy of the letter on that occasion. A conversation that she carried on at the rehearsal dinner was recounted 4 weeks later on her birthday almost verbatim to me yet she had been very confused just hours earlier when she talked with my siblings. The inconsistency, the rapidness of her deterioration (which accelerated within 2 weeks of the wedding), and some signs that pointed to left-sided weakness made us question the possibility of a stroke. We had to fight for an MRI with her primary care physician who could not be dissuaded from a diagnosis of the Alzheimer's Disease that had claimed her sister 2 years ago.

An MRI on March 13, 2002, made it clear that her participation in the wedding 6 weeks earlier was a miracle and a final gift in her life of 87 years. Mother had a large brain tumor on the right; it was malignant, aggressive, and inoperable based on size, location, and her age. She is receiving radiation in an attempt to keep her more comfortable but her days are numbered. You folks were an important part of her past and my siblings and I thought you would want to know. Thank you for giving her purpose.

Carlene Clasper Nelson
El Paso, TX

Mail Bag

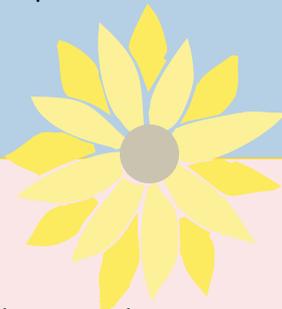


Dear Senator Rick Santorum,

I understand that you are very supportive of the VA Medical Healthcare System and want to encourage your efforts in that endeavor in the future. My father, Walter J. Schultz, died April 3 after spending 4 and one-half years in the H. J. Heinz Medical Center (both the Aspinwall and Highland Drive facilities) because he was debilitated with Alzheimer's. My last visit was in November 2001, and as a registered nurse by profession, I examined him head to toe for evidence of potential inadequate care. I couldn't have been more pleased by the physical condition in which I observed my father. Truly the staff in these facilities need to be commended for their compassion and professionalism. Like most health care facilities today, I am sure they are working with less staff and supplies than would be ideal; however, they are providing quality health care to the residents of these facilities.

Not only because it was my father, but also because these residents gave part of their lives years ago so I along with other Americans can have the benefits this country provides, I am grateful for the VA Healthcare System that now cares for those veterans in need. I hope you are able to continue to campaign for support to this and all VA health care facilities across the country.

Sincerely,
Peggy Lenke
Amarillo, Texas 79124



Spotlight On

Associate Chief of Staff for Research & Development

Steven Graham, MD



Glenn Hangard

Dr. Graham was recently appointed to serve as the Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development. Previously he served as the Associate Director of Research for the Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Center, and Staff Physician of Medical Specialties in Neurology at the VAPHS. Dr. Graham began his VA career in 1988 at the San Francisco VAMC as a Physician Associate Investigator. He received his B.A. degree from Rice University in Texas and his PhD and MD degrees from the University of Texas. Dr. Graham serves as a Professor of Neurology and is chairman of the Medical School Curriculum Committee at the University of Pittsburgh. He is also chair of the Neurosensory Medical Research Advisory Group and the Neurosensory Career Development Review Committee for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Dr. Graham is the recipient of research grants from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Institute of Health to study the genetic control of the death of nerve cells after stroke and other neurodegenerative diseases. Dr. Graham is a member of the NSD-B Study Section, the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, the National Institute of Health, and serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Cerebral Blood Flow and Metabolism*. Dr. Graham and his wife Elena have two children.

Congratulations

Employees with 20 years or more of service!

The employees listed have reached a benchmark in their years of government service during the period September 2001-June 1, 2002.

Name	Service Line	Years
Charles A. Warren	Behavioral Health	40
Linda H. Glancy	Business Services	30
Kathleen E. McDonnell	Medical Specialty	30
Joseph M. Wagner	Human Resources	30
Ruth L. Young	Surgical Specialty	30
Paul Battisti	Human Resources	25
Louis M. Biancaniello	Primary Care	25
Anna M. Boehm	Community Based Care	25
John L. Erskine	Community Based Care	25
Christine A. Geer	Community Based Care	25
Diane Jeffco	Human Resources	25
Maureen C. Morgan	Business Services	25
Victoria A. Phillips	Business Services	25
Elizabeth A. Spernak	Medical Specialty	25
Nicholas L. Squeglia	Research & Development	25
Wilma A. Buford	Patient Care Services	20
Sponce A. Cade	Facilities Management	20
Joyce A. Clohecy	Education	20
Karen A. Colbert	Business Services	20
Clyde A. Crispen	Facilities Management	20
Adrian A. Darden	Business Services	20
Karen L. Delorme	Behavioral Health	20
Helen A. Dowds	Education	20
Queenie Duckett	Behavioral Health	20
Sammy L. Johnson	Patient Care Services	20
Barry Jordan	Facilities Management	20
Virginia Manning	Education	20
Christine Manno-McCormick	Clinical Support	20
Dietta Murray	Facilities Management	20
Renee Senko Mutschler	Surgical Specialty	20
Lauvenia M. Oliver	Clinical Support	20
Beverly V. Onajide	Community Based Care	20
Frank M. Newman	Information Management	20
David E. Sanders	Business Services	20
William A. Ward	Facilities Management	20
Cheryl V. Welch	Business Services	20



Sean P. Scanlon

The VAPHS Annual Volunteer Recognition Ceremony was held June 7th at the Heinz Division. A picnic style luncheon was served to approximately 300 loyal dedicated volunteers in appreciation for all they do for our veterans. Our volunteers donated over 140,000 hours of service last fiscal year and contributed over \$585,000 toward the welfare and benefit of our hospitalized veterans.

Pittsburgh Healthcare System

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1-800-647-6220

Highland Drive Division

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