Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center
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Health Trends

Major U.S. City Succumbs to Poisonous Toxin?

Imagine if you were to wake up one day and hear on the news that people in the city of Pittsburgh were dying. One by one, the entire city was being decimated by a poisonous and deadly toxin. As you listen more carefully, you hear that the toxin is spreading to outlying areas. Imagine now, if you lived in nearby Philadelphia. Would you be concerned?

Currently, tobacco is responsible for more than 400,000 deaths annually – that's more people than live in major cities such as Pittsburgh, Miami and St. Louis. Despite this alarming statistic, there are several reasons to be hopeful for the future. First, we have an excellent understanding of nicotine addiction. For example, we know that within 48-72 hours of stopping smoking, there is no more nicotine in the body. More importantly, we know that within 24 hours of cessation, the level of oxygen in the blood returns to normal and the risk for having a heart attack decreases. Secondly, we have researched the most effective ways of helping people become nonsmokers. For instance, learning behavioral and cognitive strategies are linked to successful cessation. We also know that people who learn these skills double their rate of success. Finally, the groups are lead by clinical psychologists and interns who specialize in understanding habit control problems and coping techniques.

Joe Bailey has found success through the smoking cessation program.

If you are a veteran who is currently smoking and would like to learn ways to stop this habit, help is available through the Carl T. Hayden VAMC. Please contact your Primary Care Provider and request a consultation to the Smoking Cessation Program.

New HIV Trial Underway

Dr. Reust at our Carl T. Hayden VAMC is participating in the first Tri-National Clinical Trial that includes Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. The study is named OPTIMA, which stands for Options in Management with Anti-retrovirals. Teams of researchers from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the US Department of Veterans Affairs, Cooperative Studies Program (US-VACSP), and the Medical Research Council of the United Kingdom (MRC-UK), will assess new therapeutic strategies in persons with AIDS for whom antiretroviral therapy (ART) has failed.

The research will be enrolling 1700 patients and will be conducted at 22 hospitals in Canada, 25 in the UK and 30 Veterans Affairs hospitals in the US. This research will test new strategies for the use of medicines available to treat HIV infection.

To qualify for participation in this study, you must be on at least your second drug regimen and your viral load must be greater than 5,000.

For more information, please contact Patricia Hayward, L.P.N at Ext. 5070.

Basic Computer Classes for Veterans!
Patients, you can sign up for classes, by calling Tim Obong at 602-254-5611 to register.

Arizona Senior Olympics "Battle of the Armed Forces"

Finally, the question of which branch of the Armed Forces is the toughest and most physically fit, at least in the terms of longevity, will be answered. The Carl T. Hayden Veterans Affairs Medical Center will be sponsoring the "Battle of the Armed Forces" Competition in the 2003 Arizona Senior Olympics Masters Games.

The winning branch of the Armed Forces will be determined by points awarded to its athletes for capturing medals in more than twenty-five individual sports during the 2003 Games. Five points will be awarded for gold medals, three points for silver and one point for bronze.

At the end of the Games, the branch of the Armed Forces whose athletes have accumulated the highest number of points will be declared the victor of the "Battle of the Armed Forces". This branch will be honored with a ceremony and a plaque at the Carl T. Hayden Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

If you wish to compete in the 2003 Senior Olympics Masters Games and the "Battle of the Armed Forces", you must be 50 or older by February 15, 2003 and be registered in the Games. To obtain a 2003 Games Registration Book, call (602) 261-8765 or write to Arizona Senior Olympics at P.O. Box 60425, Phoenix, AZ 85082-0425.

Remember, athletes must declare which branch of the Armed Forces they are veterans of, or are currently on active duty in, on their 2003 Games Registration Form to compete for their branch of military service in the "Battle of the Armed Forces" Competition.

Weight Loss Tips…

Try these tips - make a lifestyle change!

1. Avoid fast food restaurants.
2. Switch to sugar free drinks.
3. Avoid any place that advertises "all you can eat".
4. At a restaurant order your meal from the appetizer menu, split with someone, or take half of the meal home.
5. Do not drink a beverage with your meal. Eat slowly; it will help you avoid gulping down your meals.
6. At home, clear your countertops—after all, out of sight, out of mind.
7. Drink more water.
8. Put your fork down between bites.
9. When you eat a meal, turn off the tv. Concentrate only on your meal.
10. Reward yourself for your lifestyle change: take a walk, read a book, visit a museum, go to a movie (skip the popcorn).

Remember…Eat to live, don't live to eat.

If you have diabetes and have not yet attended the diabetes education class, it is not too late.

Register through your primary care clinic.

Diabetes Education Classes

Attend nine hours of diabetes education, split into two 4 1/2hour sessions. Class covers major aspects of diabetes care management. Plan to attend all topics on both days.

Weight Management Program

The weight management class at the VA can help you. The class meets once a week for 7 weeks. Both morning and afternoon classes are available.

Even after the class is over, you will be able to continue to see a dietician for expert advice.

Cooking Class

Come attend on the first Wednesday of every month from 9-10am.

Heart Health Class

Daily in the Emerald clinic from 10-11am.

Sign up through your primary care clinic dietician

Telephone Care Services

by Dielene Coleman, R.N.

TRIAGE—according to Webster's dictionary is: "The screening and classification of wounded, sick or injured patients during war or another diaster to determine priority needs and thereby ensure the most effective use of medical and surgical personnel, equipment or facilities".

As veterans, many of you are familiar with this concept. The management and staff of the VA Medical Center instituted this program almost 5 years ago to quickly facilitate patient care and to spare veterans long waiting times in the various clinics.

The clinics serviced by the Telephone Care staff are Diamond, Platinum, Emerald, Gold and Show Low. All other clinics are referred to the main hospital phone number of 602-277-5551 for assistance.

The staff consists of experienced Registered Nurses, Patient Services Assistants and a Pharmacy Technician. They are available Monday through Friday from 7:30 to 3:50, excluding Federal holidays.

The staff will assist you with urgent/emergent medical problems, such as chest pain, difficulty breathing, Diabetic problems, illnesses, rashes, accidents and other minor problems. They will give you the results of normal labs, assist with ordering expired and/or medications with no active refills left and discuss any medical questions you may have.

After close of business at 3:50, the calls will be routed to the Dallas Call Center that is also staffed with experienced Registered Nurses. They are also available to assist you with urgent/emergent medical issues and give advice.

The call nurses are UNABLE to assist you with the following:

- Prescription reordering
- Appointment scheduling, canceling or appointment checking. You may call Centralized Scheduling at 602-222-6501 for assistance during business hours
- Give you any laboratory results
- Arrange transportation
- Send a message to staff members or contact your Primary Care Provider

Please arrange to take care of these non-urgent matters during business hours only. By doing this you will allow us more time to discuss the urgent problems or questions you may have.

'Tis the Season for Stress

Seasonal celebrations, particularly Thanksgiving and Christmas, are extremely stressful for many people. Try these tips for keeping your holiday spirits bright.

1 **Bury the hatchet.** Divorced spouses wreak havoc with scheduling. Don't refuse invitations because your ex is on the guest list and don't make your children feel guilty for celebrating at your ex's home instead of yours.

2 **Celebrate life.** Holidays are difficult after losing someone special. When you feel sad, write in a journal about funny or touching incidents involving your loved one.

3 **Spend realistically.** Dad was right when he said money doesn't grow on trees, so set spending limits and stick to them.

4 **Forget shopping.** Do you fret about choosing the right gift? Do you worry about spending too much or too little? No time to schedule shopping trips? Gift certificates are actually a thoughtful choice, since they always fit and are always the right color.

5 **Act like a kid.** Take a hint from youngsters: drink hot cocoa, go caroling, surprise someone under mistletoe or hang a stocking for yourself.

6 **Plan ahead.** Making travel plans well in advance can save money and frustration. Allow time for unexpected delays, and make certain someone knows your travel route if you'll be driving.

7 **Spend time alone.** Don't feel obligated to accept every invitation, and allow time for non-holiday related activities you enjoy.

8 **Avoid alcohol.** Never drink and drive, and don't let your friends or guests do it either.

9 **Awaken your spirit.** Year-end holidays are a perfect time to nurture your spiritual beliefs by worshiping at the church or synagogue of your choice.

10 **Lend a hand.** Donating time or money to others that are less fortunate keeps your life in perspective. Besides, it just feels good.

VA Center Develops Tools to Improve Patient Safety

A fall can be a life-changing event for an elderly person. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that about 40 percent of all nursing home admissions are as a result of a fall. For people older than 65, falls are the leading causes of injury deaths.

VA Tampa has become a leader in the field of fall prevention. They have opened a Patient Safety Center where doctors, nurses, therapists, researchers, consultants and biomechanical engineers are developing tools to help elderly people avoid accidents.

At the Tampa Patient Safety Center they use a 200-pound mannequin named Eric to test equipment for bed-ridden patients, prevent bedsores, and determine how to prevent injuries to staff. A computer-controlled balance machine helps determine where patients first get into trouble and helps the therapist design exercises for improving balance.

The VA has funded three other centers nationally, in Cincinnati, Boston and Palo Alto. The advances in equipment and fall prevention that are developed at these centers are shared with VA medical centers across the country to improve patient care and safety. VA is a leader in patient safety and some of the ideas in the Tampa center are expected to become the standard in the health care industry.

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We encourage readers to reprint and distribute articles (or excerpts of articles) from any issue of *Health Trends*, with acknowledgement given to this publication. In addition, we encourage groups with Web sites (such as veterans service organizations) to link to our site at http://www.va.gov/visn18

Please notify us about any reprints or distribution by writing to:

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650 E Indian School Road
Phoenix, AZ 85012-1892

Visit our new website to get information on health and medication questions at: http://www.va.gov/visn18/HI/Health_informatics.htm

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For patient concerns or issues, contact our patient representatives at (602) 277-5551, Ext. 7394.

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