

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT QUARTERLY • • • •

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The **Quarterly Newsletter**
of the Office of Community
Engagement & Center for
Compassionate Care Innovation

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ABOUT US

Office of Community Engagement

The mission of the Office of Community Engagement (OCE) is to serve as a trusted resource and a catalyst for the growth of effective partnerships at the national, state, and community level and as a facilitator/access point for public and private entities interested in partnering with VHA to benefit Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors.

Center for Compassionate Care Innovation

The mission of the Center for Compassionate Care Innovation (CCI) is to explore emerging therapies that are safe and ethical to enhance Veteran physical and mental well-being when other treatments have not been successful. CCI primarily focuses on treatments that address the following health concerns: suicide prevention, traumatic brain injury (TBI), posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and chronic pain.

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Get our news updates!

Visit <https://www.va.gov/healthpartnerships> and enter your email address in the “Connect with VHA” box on the right.



Veterans display donated adaptive bikes during a November 2017 Health on Wheels event at the John J. Pershing VA Medical Center in Poplar Bluff, Missouri.

AMBUCS Partnership “Wheels” in Mobility and Independence

A memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and National AMBUCS, Inc. is promoting mobility among Veterans with disabilities through the donation of adaptive bikes to Veterans across the country.

Amtrykes are adaptive bikes specially fitted for Veterans with disabilities, providing them with a safe and fun way to get exercise.

Since 2010, nearly 600 Amtrykes have been provided through the [National AMBUCS Veterans Initiative Program](#), mostly through a network of 156 AMBUCS volunteer chapters in 35 states.

AMBUCS chapter members consist of Veterans, representatives of Veteran support organizations and other citizens. Chapter members support the partnership by engaging in activities such as:

- Fundraising for bike-donation programs
- Repairing Veterans’ bikes and providing them with bike maintenance tips
- Training VHA physical, occupational and recreational therapists on how to help Veterans use the bikes

Through this partnership, National AMBUCS, Inc. can supply specialized hand- or foot-powered tricycles to assist Veterans with certain mobility challenges and improve their quality of life. This partnership also creates sustainable bike programs in every community across the country.

Among other partnership activities, VHA and AMBUCS are working to identify local VA facilities interested in Amtrykes for their Veterans and prioritize donations based on the level of need.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit <https://www.ambucs.org> to learn more about its programs for Veterans and others with disabilities.

Contact Erin Slawinski at erins@ambucs.org or 336-897-4923 for information about setting up a Veteran-focused AMBUCS chapter in your community.

Contact the Office of Community Engagement at CommunityEngagement@va.gov.



VHA Invites Community Partnership Challenge Submissions that Show Return on Partnership

The Office of Community Engagement (OCE) is inviting submissions for the Under Secretary for Health’s 2018 VHA Community Partnership Challenge. The Challenge is an annual contest that highlights successful, nonmonetary partnerships between VA medical facilities and nongovernmental organizations that serve Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors.

This year’s contest theme is “Return on Partnership” (ROP). Facilities are encouraged to submit entries that demonstrate measurable results and impact for Veterans. Submissions should also exhibit how the partnership is paying off for Veterans and advancing VA’s mission.

Any VHA employee may submit a partnership entry on behalf of a Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN), medical center facility, Community Based Outpatient Clinic, Vet Center, program office or other VHA business entity. The entry must be cleared by the appropriate facility or program office leadership prior to submission.

External organizations partnering with a VHA facility can encourage their VHA points of contact to learn about the Challenge and enter to win. **Submissions are due no later than March 21, 2018.**

The top-three entries will be announced in May 2018. Winning facilities will receive: recognition in a virtual ceremony by the VHA Executive in Charge; special recognition by the Office of the Secretary; inclusion in a ceremonial video clip to be shared and seen VA-wide; a spotlight on the VA website and a feature story on Vantage Point; and a news article for placement with local media sources and wide dissemination inside and outside of VA.

MORE INFORMATION

VHA employees can get details and apply at the VHA Community Partnership Challenge portal: <http://vaww.oce.med.va.gov/>

Read about previous Challenge winners on VA’s Vantage Point blog:

- **2017 winners:** <https://go.usa.gov/xQ3bH>
- **2016 winners:** <https://go.usa.gov/xQ3bN>
- **2015 winners:** <https://go.usa.gov/xQ3bU>



Partnership with The Humane Society of the United States Announced

The Office of Community Engagement (OCE) recently facilitated a strategic partnership between VHA and The Humane Society of the United States (The HSUS) to improve quality of life for both Veterans and animals.

“There are many benefits to pet ownership for Veterans and for animals in need of care and shelter,” VA Secretary David J. Shulkin said in a statement. “The greatest benefit for both can be a more fulfilled quality of life. We are pleased to work with The HSUS on this important initiative and are excited about its potential to create more opportunities to serve.”

VA and The HSUS will build model programs and networks with local shelters, rescues and humane societies to establish connections with local VA medical facilities. These connections will make it easier to link Veterans with animals ready for adoption and fostering, support Veteran volunteerism and increase Veteran social interaction in their local communities.

Shared partnership goals include promoting opportunities for Veterans to volunteer at

and adopt animals from local animal shelters, animal rescues and humane societies. The partnership also aims to improve the health and well-being of Veterans through the human-animal bond, pet care and exercise and other healthy interactions with pets.

MORE INFORMATION

Read the VA news release about the partnership: <https://go.usa.gov/xQ3bP>



1st Lt. Andrea Deoliveira, a 60th Medical Group aerospace physiology nurse, waits inside the hyperbaric chamber with her patients minutes before beginning a treatment at the David Grant Medical Center on Travis Air Force Base. (U.S. Air Force Photo/Ken Wright)

Hyperbaric Treatment May Offer New Promise for Veterans with Chronic PTSD

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT), first used in the 1930s to treat decompression sickness in deep sea divers, is now being offered through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to a small number of Veterans diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). HBOT is a generally painless procedure that increases oxygen in the body, under pressure, to encourage healing.

VA's Center for Compassionate Care Innovation (CCI) is bringing Department of Defense (DoD) and community-based HBOT facilities together to treat a small group of Veterans who continue to experience PTSD symptoms after not having success with two or more evidence-based PTSD treatments. This clinical demonstration project is not part of ongoing research on the effectiveness of HBOT for PTSD and other off-label conditions. Offering this treatment on a small-scale in a clinical setting may provide insight into clinically relevant patient outcomes, patient expectations and considerations for more widespread availability of HBOT throughout the VA System.

Providers from the Eastern Oklahoma VA Health Care System and VA Northern California

Health Care System will oversee this care. They will work with HBOT providers at the Tulsa Wound Care & Hyperbaric Clinic at Oklahoma State Medical Center and the David Grant Medical Center on Travis Air Force Base in California, respectively. Use of HBOT for PTSD is conducted under a physician's guidance and is off-label, meaning the use of HBOT has not been approved specifically for the treatment of PTSD at this time. However, health care providers may prescribe it when they believe it is medically appropriate for a patient. Existing research suggests some patients experience improvement in posttraumatic stress symptoms following HBOT.

HBOT chambers are expensive to build, operate and maintain, and are used for a variety of medical conditions. Hyperbaric chambers are accessible at free-standing community clinics, at some military facilities and at larger medical research facilities. The CCI-facilitated collaboration between VA, DoD and community clinics is an ideal way to potentially expand HBOT services to the small slice of the Veteran population who have not responded to traditional PTSD therapies.

MORE INFORMATION

Read more about HBOT in VA's Vantage Point blog: <https://go.usa.gov/xQ3D3>

Read VA's news release about HBOT for PTSD: <https://go.usa.gov/xQ3be>



Dr. Yelena Bogdanova, VA Clinical Psychologist at VA Boston Healthcare System, demonstrates the LED therapy headset

Light Therapy Brings Treatment Home for Veterans

Veterans with a history of diagnosed mild-to-moderate traumatic brain injury (TBI) can now receive light-emitting diode (LED) therapy in their homes. The home-based treatment is available under a new initiative at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Boston Healthcare System Jamaica Plain

Campus supported by the VA's Center for Compassionate Care Innovation.

Although the exact mechanism is unclear, there is evidence suggesting that light therapy promotes a healing and rejuvenating cellular response. This is due, in part, to increased blood flow to the treated area and increased production of adenosine triphosphate, which transports energy within cells for metabolism. A recently published study (<https://go.usa.gov/xQ3bt>) reported that LED therapy can improve brain function, emotional health and sleep, and reduce chronic pain and TBI symptoms.

The first Veterans were evaluated for LED treatment in November 2017. Veterans complete their first LED therapy session at the VA in Jamaica Plain. During this appointment, they are provided with LED headsets and accessories and given instructions on how to use the equipment at home.

Providers then schedule follow-up appointments with Veterans at six and 12 weeks after their initial treatment session. At these appointments, patients will receive comprehensive assessments to determine their response to the LED treatments.

MORE INFORMATION

Read the VA news release about LED and other new treatment options: <https://go.usa.gov/xQ3bu>

Watch a video about LED therapy treatments: <https://youtu.be/T-yym1tcdm8>

Vet Center Counselors Are Trained to Help Veterans Diagnosed with PTSD Restructure Traumatic Memories

An emerging therapy is now available to Veterans diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) who seek services at one of the more than 20 Vet Center locations along the East Coast.

VA's Center for Compassionate Care Innovation (CCI) partnered with the VA Readjustment Counseling Service, which runs VA's nearly 300 Vet Centers, to train 25 Vet Center counselors in Reconsolidation of Traumatic Memories (RTM) therapy. The treatment has been shown to reduce symptoms of PTSD in Veterans.

RTM is a brief mental health therapy based in neuro-linguistic programming (NLP). Frank Bourke, Ph.D., used it successfully with 250 survivors of the World Trade Center attacks. Bourke formed the NLP R&R Project as a nonprofit to develop the research on RTM and promote its use among Veterans and members of

the military diagnosed with PTSD. Trainers and developers from the NLP R&R Project delivered RTM training to Vet Center counselors in November 2017.

Christine Newell-Loyko, a readjustment counselor based in Worcester, Massachusetts, used RTM with two Veterans immediately after returning to work from the training. Both Veterans experienced a reduction in stress and plan to continue the therapy.

"It's really exciting if it actually has the effect it's supposed to be having," Newell-Loyko said. She estimated that 95 percent of the Veterans she sees in her practice may be candidates for RTM.

Deb Moreno, North Atlantic District Director for VA's Readjustment Counseling Service, is optimistic that VA will adopt RTM more widely. "If this is successful," Moreno said, "we'd love it to spread to all 300 Vet Centers across the country."

MORE INFORMATION

Explore VA's Vet Centers: <https://go.usa.gov/xQ3bS>

If you're a Veteran in crisis, call **877-WAR-VETS** or **800-273-8255** and **press 1**.

If you're a Veteran with PTSD, visit <https://go.usa.gov/xQ3jq> to locate a Vet Center in one of the following locations with counselors now trained in RTM:

- Hartford, CT
- Fayetteville and Jacksonville, NC
- Wilmington, DE
- Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Erie and Williamsport, PA
- Elkton and Prince George's County, MD
- South Burlington, VT
- Brockton, Cape Cod and Worcester, MA
- Alexandria and Norfolk, VA
- Trenton and Lakewood, NJ
- Beckley, WV
- Babylon, Buffalo and Manhattan, NY



MORE INFORMATION

VA employees can read more about this presentation on the CCI VA Pulse page: <http://bit.ly/2DxvGol>

Anyone interested in submitting an emerging therapy to CCI can read the guidelines at <https://go.usa.gov/xQ3jx> and submit proposals at CCI's portal: <https://vacommunity.secure.force.com/ccisubmissionportal/>

Read VA's press release on the Mental Health Mobility Service Dog Benefit Initiative: <https://go.usa.gov/xQ3jr>

VA's Center for Compassionate Care Innovation Showcased at Prestigious Health Conference

Alyssa Adams, PsyD, CNS, and Lauren Korshak, M.S., RCEP, Health System Specialists with the Center for Compassionate Care Innovation (CCI), headed to Baltimore last fall to present two posters at the annual Planetree International Conference on Patient-Centered Care. The conference is an annual gathering that attracts nearly 1,000 attendees from all facets of the health care industry.

One poster, Compassionate Innovation Expands Veterans' Access to Treatment, outlined CCI's role in VA to explore cutting-edge therapies and emerging treatment modalities. CCI is interested in evaluating treatments that show promise for Veterans who have not responded to conventional treatment at VA.

The second poster highlighted CCI's pioneering work on the Mental Health Mobility Service Dog Benefit Initiative.

Veterans Hub: Spotlight on Partners



DO YOU KNOW ABOUT VA'S VETERANS HUB?

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is partnering with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) in their global public health initiative – 100 Million Healthier Lives. The 100 MHL Initiative has several hubs including Aging Well, Child Health, Business, and the Veterans Hub. The Veterans Hub goal is to improve the health and well-being of 20 million Veterans by 2020. Only 9 million of the 22 million Veterans in the United States receive their care in the VA. Therefore, the only way this goal can be achieved is through unprecedented collaboration with local, state, and national organizations.

The Veterans Hub aims to enrich the lives of Veterans in their communities by building community coalitions and social networks to address the social determinants of health. These include access to safe housing, food security, reliable transportation, spiritual support, and comprehensive health care services. The Veterans Hub is building bridges between organizations, communities and social support systems in order to create enabling conditions in support of its mission and theme – "Working together to help Veterans thrive."

Join the Veterans Hub!

For more information, please go to <https://www.100mlives.org/>.

For additional information about the Hub, contact Lauren Korshak at lauren.korshak@va.gov.

In the next issue

OCE

- The winner of the 2018 VHA National Community Partnership Challenge will be announced in May!
- Pilot site updates from VHA's partnership with United Through Reading.
- Find out how VA's medical-legal partnerships are helping Veterans in need.

Get Involved

- Want to partner with VA? Email us at CommunityEngagement@va.gov.
- Visit our website at <https://www.va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/oceabout.asp>
- Get previous issues of the newsletter on the website by visiting the link above and clicking the left-hand navigation bar.

CCI

- VHA's new video about stellate ganglion block therapy and updates on emerging therapies offering hope and help to Veterans.
- Updates on HBOT outcomes, and other clinical demonstration project updates from CCI.

Get Involved

- Share stories of Veteran-service dog pairing successes under the Mental Health Mobility Service Dog Initiative to VHACCISD@va.gov.
- Visit our website at <https://www.va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/index.asp>
- Submit an emerging therapy proposal through our portal at <https://www.va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/CCISubmitaProposal.asp>

VA



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ON THE HORIZON