



PennState Health
Milton S. Hershey Medical Center

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May 8, 2017

The Honorable David J. Shulkin, M.D.
Office of the Secretary of Veteran's Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shulkin:

On behalf of the Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center located in Hershey, Pennsylvania, I am responding to your correspondence of March 24, 2017, in which you request feedback on ways the Department of Veteran's Affairs and the academic community might work to overcome challenges and barriers that are delaying us from realizing our full potential as partners.

I recently had the opportunity to meet with you and participate in the roundtable discussion hosted by Congressman Charlie Dent at Cedar Crest College in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Thank you for your willingness to address some of the difficult issues that have prevented the VA health system and its partners in the academic community from providing the best possible health care to our deserving veterans. Although there are examples of how the Lebanon VA Medical Center and Penn State Hershey have shared services in the past, they are limited and disjointed.

We have long sought the opportunity to establish an integrated and seamless care delivery model with the Lebanon VA Medical Center, whereby procedures the VA is unable to perform can be performed at Penn State Hershey allowing patients to recover close to home with family and other support systems nearby. Unfortunately this effort has been fruitless and local VA patients continue to be sent to facilities in other cities and states, often having to travel hundreds of miles for procedures that can be done at Penn State Hershey with outstanding outcomes and often at lower cost. We have the capabilities to handle the most advanced clinical care requirements that our veterans may need in such areas as cardiovascular diseases, oncology, surgery, neurosurgery, and orthopedics.

We welcome the opportunity to renew these discussions with the leadership of the Lebanon VA Medical Center and are heartened by the comments you made at the recent roundtable discussion that the best healthcare for veterans comes from a system that integrates the current strengths of the VA to provide for the "whole health" of the veteran while working with the private sector providers to address critical access issues.

We intend to call upon Congressman Dent to facilitate this discussion and hope we can rely upon your support to bring about real and meaningful change to the betterment of the overall health and wellbeing of our veterans.

Sincerely,

Peter W. Dillon, M.D., M.Sc.

cc: Karen Sanders, Deputy Chief, Office of Academic Affiliation
Veterans Health Administration

The Honorable Charlie Dent, Chair, Subcommittee on Military Construction
Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies

