



VA
HEALTH
CARE | Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century

Capturing Personalized, Proactive, Patient-Driven Care **Across VA**

*A Report by the VA Office of Patient Centered
Care and Cultural Transformation*

Health
for **Life** 

www.va.gov/patientcenteredcare





In VA —
We Value Veterans
and **What Veterans Value**

Health
for Life 

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“It’s really pretty simple. A Veteran who is engaged and inspired is the most likely to achieve their highest possible level of health and well-being. The challenge is — how do we redesign health care to achieve this?”

*— Tracy Gaudet
Executive Director,
Office of Patient
Centered Care
and Cultural
Transformation*



A Letter from the Executive Director:

Personalized, Proactive, Patient-Driven Care at VA

Find the problem, then fix the problem. For decades, that was the heart of health care in the United States.

It's what doctors were trained to do: *How long have you been feeling this way? How did it start? What are your symptoms?*

That was, largely, the extent of the conversation. Most everything about a patient's visit revolved around the illness, not the person.





But for the past three years, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been transforming its approach from problem-based disease care to patient centered health care. The Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation (OPCC&CT) was founded to work with Veterans, VA leadership, health care providers, and staff to realize this transformation that extends from the traditional medical model, which focuses on treating specific issues, to a personalized, proactive, patient-driven model: whole health. What, specifically, does this mean for our approach?

Personalized: A *personalized* approach requires a dynamic customization of self-care and professional health care strategies. These must be specifically relevant to the individual, based on factors such as their medical conditions, genome, needs, values, and circumstances.

Proactive: A *proactive* approach uses strategies that strengthen each patient’s innate capacity for health and healing, such as mind-body therapies and nutritional changes to build resilience prior to surgery or chemotherapy.

Patient-driven: A *patient-driven* model is rooted in and guided by what matters most to the person, aligning their health care with their day-to-day goals and lifelong aspirations. This is the most critical component, because a personalized, proactive approach that is not based on the individual’s values will have little impact. A person who is engaged and inspired is the most likely to achieve the highest possible level of health and well-being.

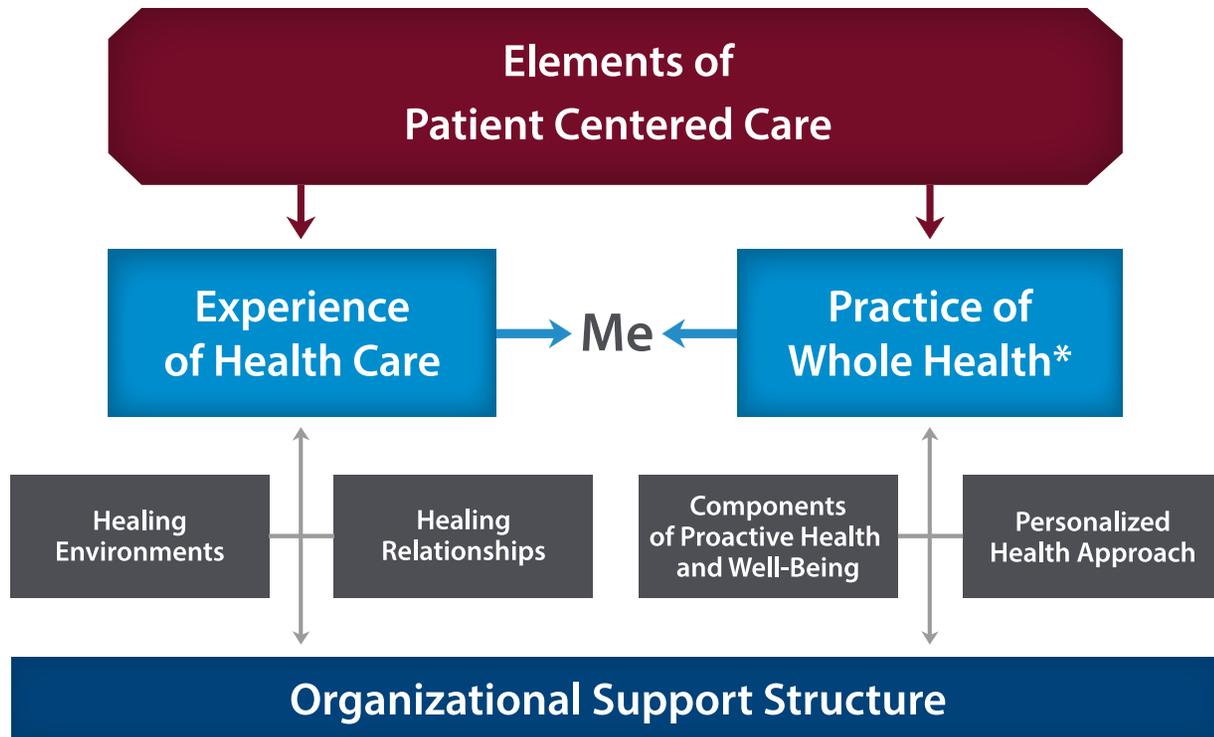
To deliver whole health, VA is applying the Elements of Patient Centered Care — a model that starts with an exploration of what matters most to Veterans and partners with them to achieve their best possible health.

In addition to a whole health approach, creating healing environments and relationships is critical to the Veteran’s experience. Developing healing environments can mean making sure the chairs in the waiting room are comfortable, warmly greeting all Veterans when they enter a VA facility, or redesigning space with Veterans’ involvement from the beginning phases to ensure the space meets their needs and expectations. Healing relationships are genuine, personal connections, whether long-term or momentary — a look, a word, a comforting touch.



“Advance health care that is personalized, proactive, and patient-driven, and engages and inspires Veterans to their highest possible level of health and well-being.”

— VHA Blueprint for Excellence, Strategy Six



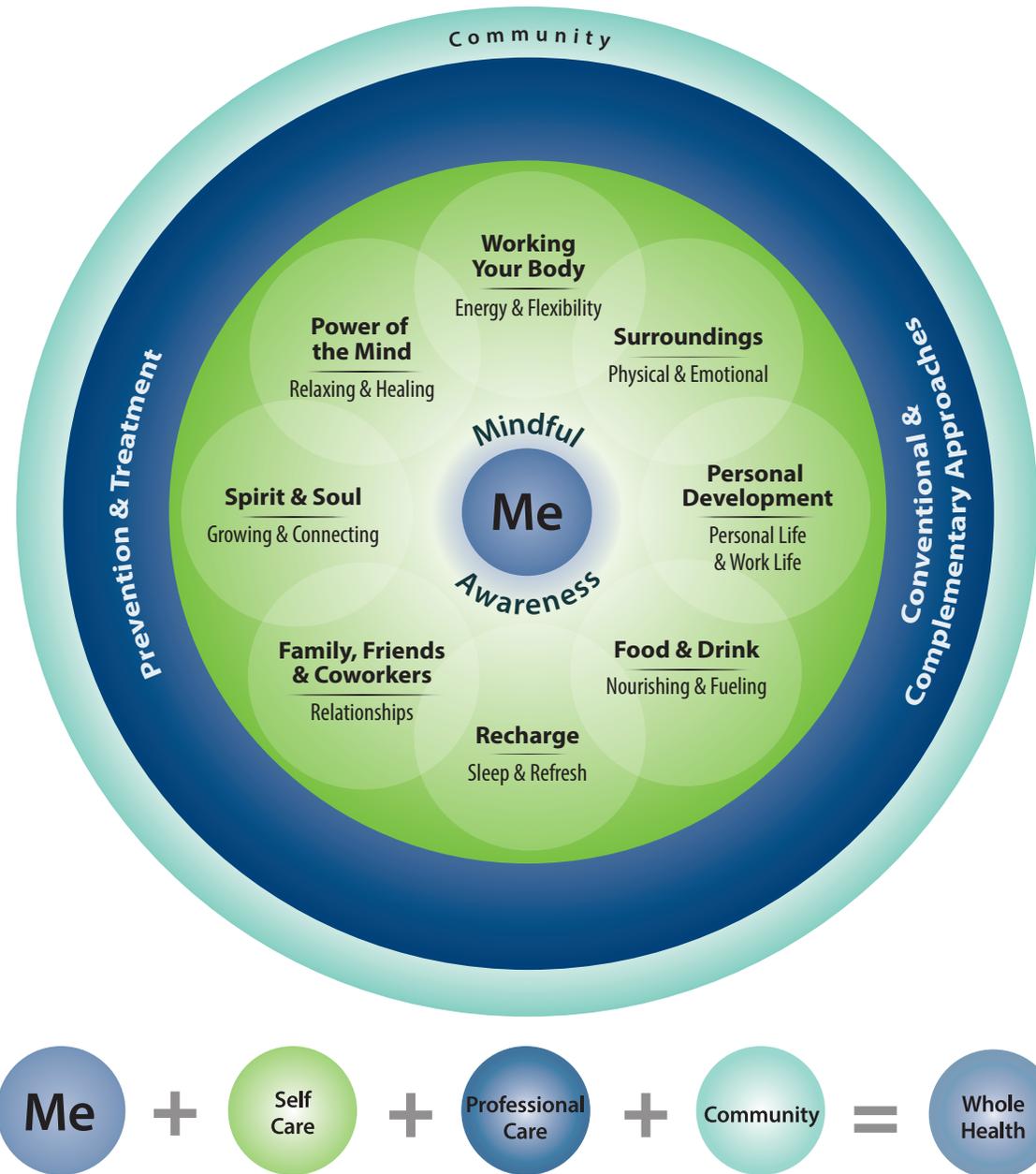
*Personalized, Proactive, Patient-Driven Care

Components of Proactive Health and Well-Being

The practice of whole health care is a core element of VA's patient centered approach. We are working with patients to create a personalized health plan that is tailored to their individual history, needs, values, and goals. Building a personalized health plan around what matters most to the Veteran creates a roadmap that addresses their whole health.

The concept of whole health is best represented by the Components of Proactive Health and Well-Being. This model places the Veteran at the center of his or her health and embraces self-care as well as professional care, all in the context of the Veteran's community.

This model and the shift to whole health are not simply academic; their real-life impact is evidenced by robust and ongoing patient centered care initiatives. For instance, in a study conducted at VA New Jersey Health Care System, patients reported better provider communication and collaboration, and higher satisfaction with their office visits overall, than were reported by patients at a regional comparison site of similar complexity that does not emphasize patient centered care. Another report showed that Veterans believe that the Personal Health Inventory (PHI), a tool





Throughout this document you will read about the personal stories of Veterans that we are honored to serve. There are also references to accomplishments of **Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN), medical centers, and Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Program Offices**. It is through these partnerships that we advance a model of health care that is personalized, proactive, and patient-driven, and engages and inspires Veterans to their highest possible level of health and well-being.



developed by the OPCC&CT, is useful for engineering their care based around their values, priorities, and what matters most to them. Throughout this report we will take a look at these studies, and many more, to demonstrate the impact of patient centered care for Veterans as well as for VA.

This report aims to provide you with the concepts, data, tools, and vision to help continue VA's journey toward delivering a new model of care. In addition to sharing the latest progress, accomplishments, and research on patient centered care, we want to share individual stories that illustrate how the voice of the Veteran is integral to VA's health care transformation. As these Veterans will tell you, their health has improved thanks to whole health care practices adopted by VA providers and staff.

We aspire to make such stories of positive outcomes and patient satisfaction the standard of health care at VA.

Sincerely,
Tracy Gaudet, M.D.
Executive Director
Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation
Veterans Health Administration

DAVID

An excerpt of "Broken"
by David Jones

Used with permission of the author

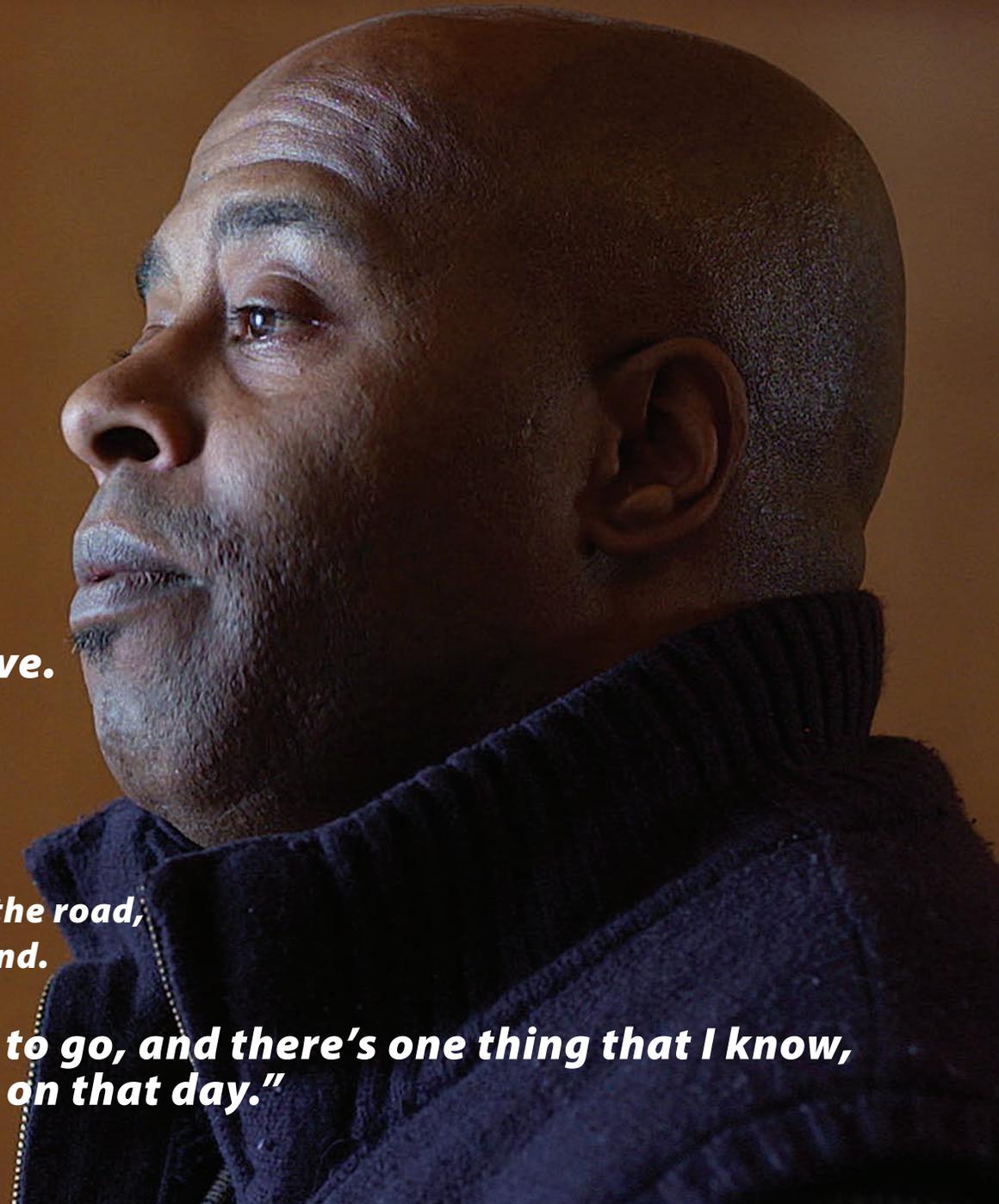
***"Blaming my roots,
blind to the truth,
not receiving the solutions they give.***

***Exhausted from surviving,
naive to surrendering,
but wanting to live.***

***Someone got in my way,
for whatever reason that's where they stay
— extended their hand for me to find.***

***Helped carry my load as we walked up the road,
spoken words of a journey left behind.***

***Showed me where to go, and there's one thing that I know,
they saved my life on that day."***



Driving Transformation

David served in the U.S. Air Force from 1991 to 1995 and reenlisted as a combat medic for five tours in the U.S. Army from 2004 to 2013. After returning home, he had trouble transitioning back to his roles as a husband and father. He came to the VA Hudson Valley Health Care System, where he signed up for art therapy — a program that allowed him to express pent-up feelings from his time in service. It was this whole health approach, the personalized, proactive, and patient-driven care David received, that made a meaningful difference in his life.



To be the provider of choice for our nation's Veterans, VA is creating an organization that puts Veterans in control of how, when, and where they are served to best achieve their goals. VA strives to be a place Veterans are proud to call "My VA."

For more than three years, the OPCC&CT has been exploring what it takes to place the voice of the Veteran at the center of the practice and experience of VA health care. We have heard overwhelmingly from Veterans that they want care that treats them as a whole person — after all, no one knows better than Veterans themselves what they need to live their lives to the fullest.

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) developed the Blueprint for Excellence, which VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald has endorsed, to guide its transformation. This document describes the new health care model as one that benefits health providers as much as Veteran patients by shifting from "sick care" to "health care" in the broadest sense of the term. This system of whole health care anticipates and meets the unique needs of enrolled Veterans and, thanks to your efforts as health care providers and staff, Veterans are inspired to seek and reach their highest possible level of health and well-being.

What Is Whole Health Care?

By putting Veterans instead of illnesses at the center of care, whole health care allows each provider and Veteran to address specific medical issues, consider all aspects of a Veteran's health and well-being, and set achievable health goals – together. VA is using evidence-based therapeutic approaches and disciplines to empower all Veterans with personalized, proactive, patient-driven care.

By making the most of collaboration and communication among VA staff, Veterans, and their loved ones, we can provide Veterans with whole health care. Section VI of this report summarizes the Elements of Patient Centered Care and how they promote the whole health care approach and enhance the Veteran's experience of health care.

From Inspiration to Implementation

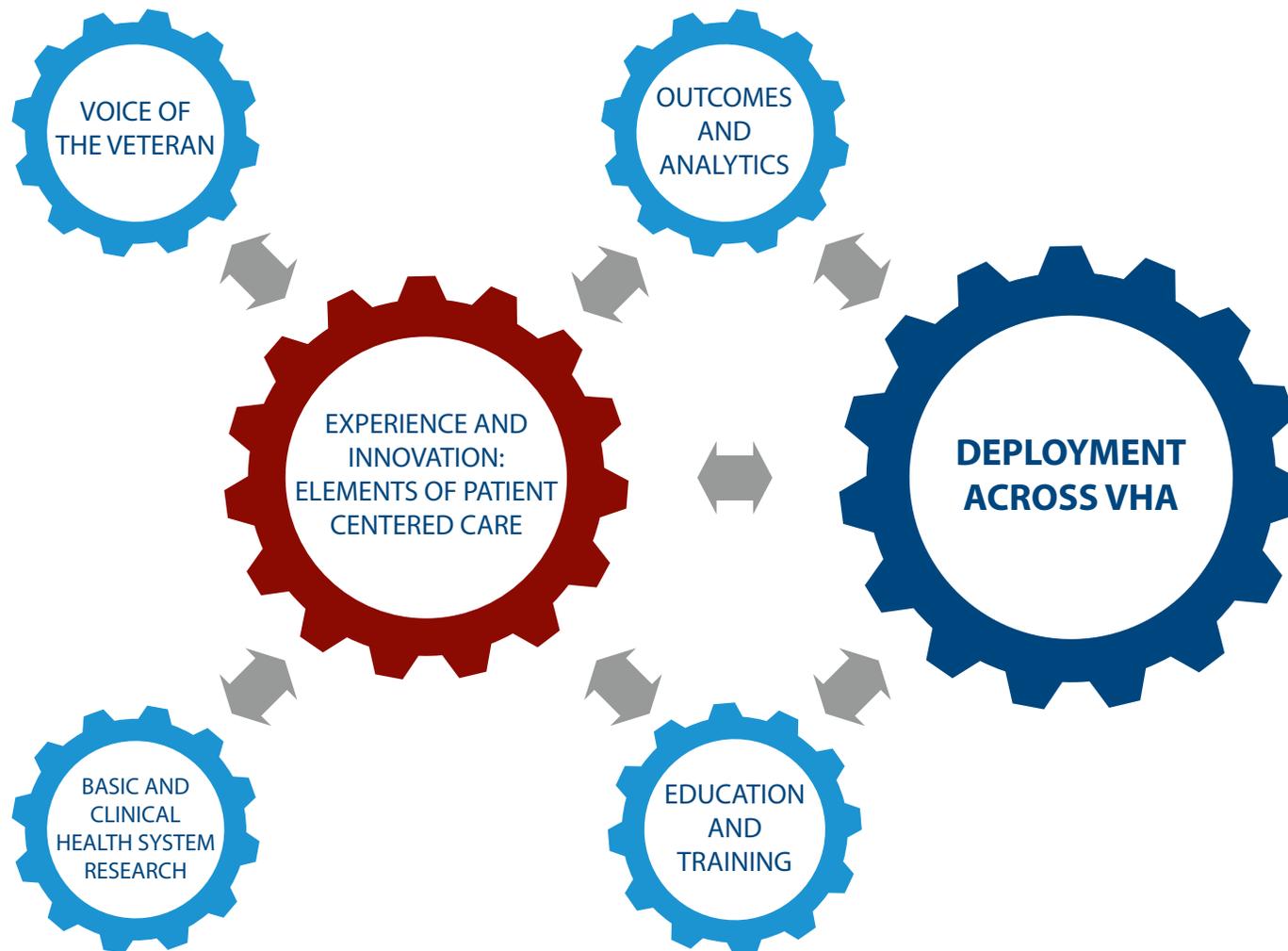
To bring whole health care to life, VA needs to spark sweeping transformation across the entire health care system. Over the past few years, the OPCC&CT has researched what it takes to transform the culture of an organization with more than 320,000 employees. The OPCC&CT created the Innovation Engine, a model that guides our strategies and efforts for transformation. The Innovation Engine shows how to cultivate and deploy innovation across the system with input from Veterans throughout the organization. Success is predicated on listening to Veterans' perspectives and partnering with them as it relates to both their whole health and VA's cultural transformation. The voice of the Veteran can help us enhance culture, processes, and capabilities and better meet the needs, expectations, and interests of Veterans and their families. Research will help ensure we move forward with an evidence-based approach. We are applying the lessons learned and the strongest outcomes to our education, training, and consultative services as we deploy patient centered care across VHA.

Although the Innovation Engine provides an approach to drive transformation, real change happens in facilities around the country,

where staff members integrate Veterans' ideas and experiences to address all aspects of their health and well-being. Individually, clinicians are connecting with Veterans to explore what matters most to them and make that the foundation of their health care.

Everyone at VA can play a supporting role and innovate to create an environment in which Veterans can thrive. The next four sections of this report describe how the pieces of the Innovation Engine work together to drive organizational change.

Innovation Engine



Veteran Story:

JUSTIN

“One of the things that I like to bring, personally, is just I’ve been there ... and I’d like the patients to benefit in the same type of way. ... As a Veteran who comes here for care, these are the options that I want to have.”

— *Justin*



Listening to the **Voice of the Veteran**

Justin served in the U.S. Navy from 2000 to 2006 and suffered a labral tear in his shoulder while on active duty. Although he was considering surgery with possible long-term effects on his mobility, years earlier he had responded well to acupuncture. Justin's VA care team talked about this and other complementary therapies, organizing his recovery around acupuncture sessions, swimming, and physical therapy. After a month of intensive work, Justin recovered completely — without surgery. He was so impressed with acupuncture that he went on to become a licensed acupuncturist, and he still uses it to manage some of his chronic injuries. He went on to work with the Washington DC VA Medical Center, sharing the success he had with his fellow Veterans.





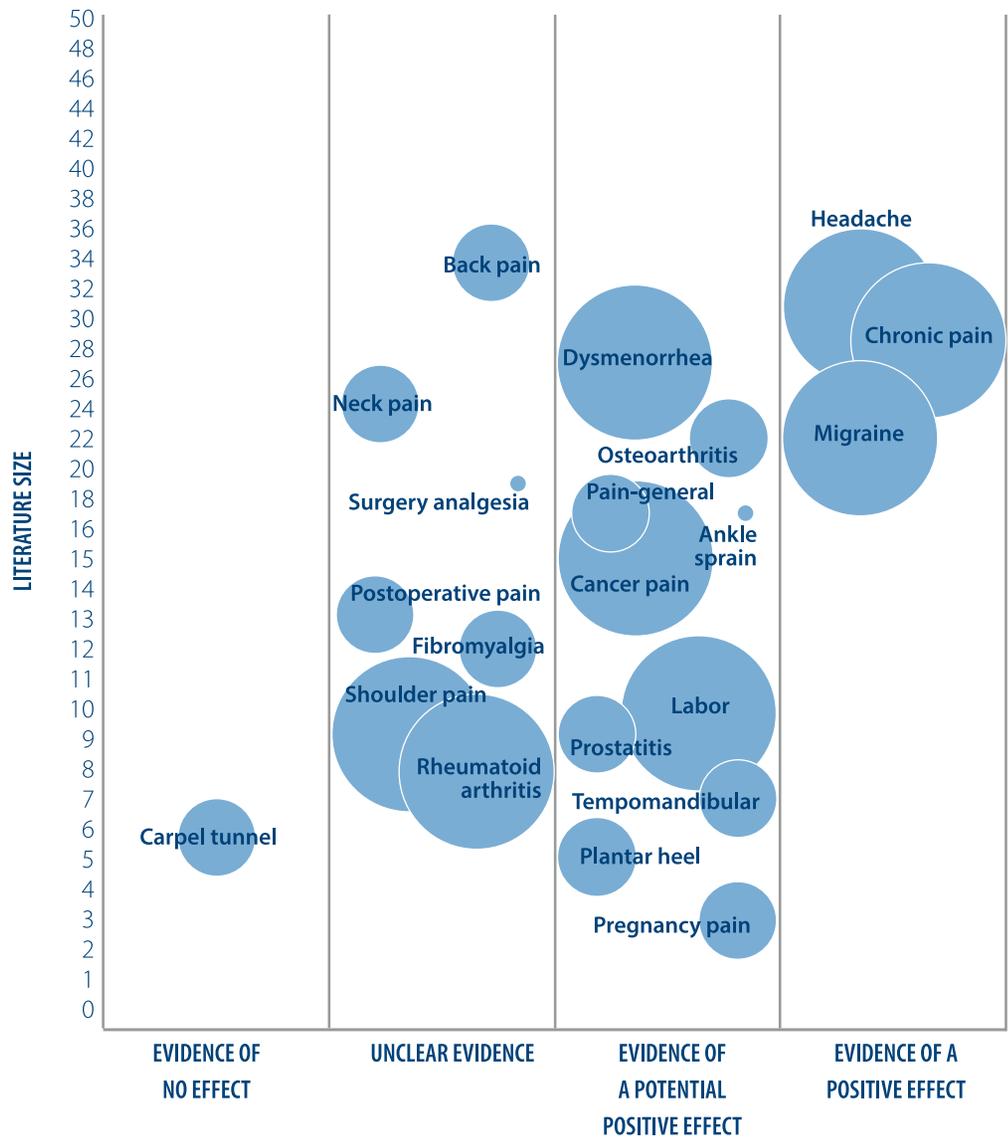
Evidence Map: Acupuncture

The term “acupuncture” describes a family of procedures involving the stimulation of points on the body using a variety of techniques. The acupuncture technique that has been most often studied scientifically involves penetrating the skin with thin, solid, metallic needles that are manipulated by the hands or by electrical stimulation. Practiced in China and other Asian countries for thousands of years, acupuncture is one of the key components of traditional Chinese medicine.

VA’s Evidence Synthesis Program (ESP) analyzed 65 systematic reviews of studies performed between 2005 and 2013 that evaluated acupuncture treatment for 21 pain-related conditions.

The evidence map of acupuncture illustrates its potential for relieving many symptoms, especially chronic pain.

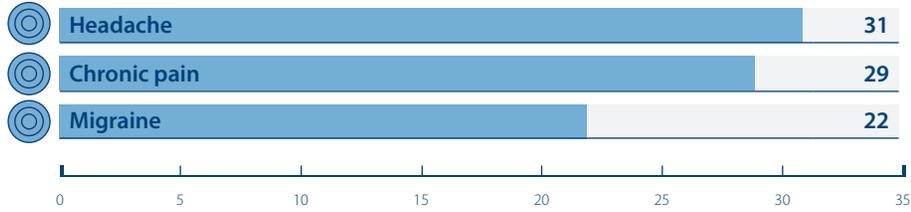
Find the complete report on acupuncture through our Resource Navigator at HealthforLife.vacloud.us.



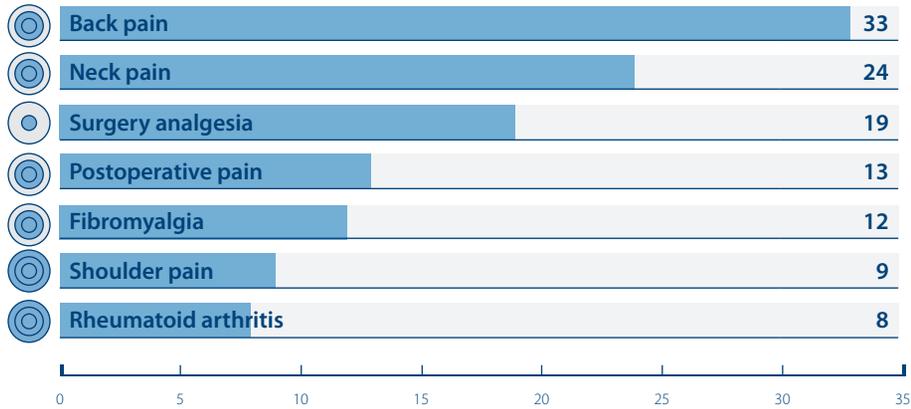
Evidence Confidence Level: **LOW** | MEDIUM | HIGH

LOW: (1 dot) MEDIUM: (2 dots) HIGH: (3 dots)

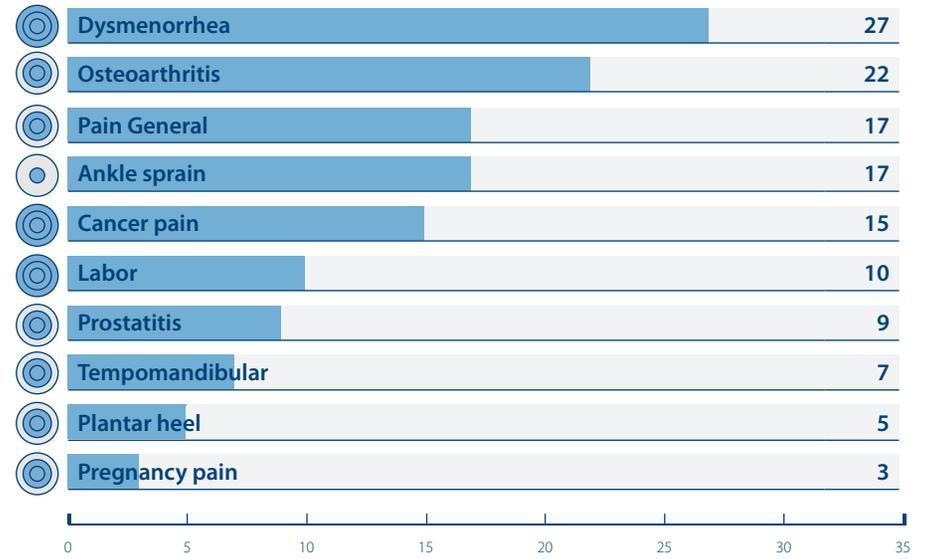
EVIDENCE OF A POSITIVE EFFECT



UNCLEAR EVIDENCE



EVIDENCE OF A POTENTIAL POSITIVE EFFECT



EVIDENCE OF NO EFFECT





In VA's evolution to whole health care, we must listen carefully to what Veterans across the country are saying about their health care experience to be able to provide an exceptional system and programs that best serve their needs in a personalized, proactive, and patient-driven way.

That is why the national Veterans Experience Committee (VEC) formed a subcommittee focused solely on understanding patient perspectives. The subcommittee works with Veterans across all demographics — ages, races, cultures, genders, service branches, and more. Their diverse perspectives are helping us shape processes that can cater to each patient's values and priorities.

Veteran and Family Advisory Programs

VA's Veteran and Family Advisory Programs give Veterans and their family members who have been patients at a VA facility a forum for exchanging ideas and perspectives with VA staff, lending valuable insights on the care process. For example, the perspectives of Veteran and family advisors are informing how VA facilities can refine and sustain healing environments and healing relationships, two pillars of the Veteran's experience of health care. Veteran and Family Advisory Councils create a collaborative partnership among patients, families, and staff to enhance the Veteran experience, support policy and program development, foster professional development, and help improve the delivery of care.

The duties of Veteran and Family Advisory Councils include:

- Sharing perspectives, experiences, and suggestions
- Helping to create, implement, and evaluate policies, programs, and services
- Reaching out and listening to Veterans, family members, staff, and community members
- Working to improve relationships among Veterans, family members, staff, and care providers

The OPCC&CT works with medical center leaders across the country to implement Veteran and Family Advisory Programs at a local level.

VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VISN 21) has partnered with the OPCC&CT to develop a two-day Patient/Family Advisory Council Workshop. The workshop assists facilities in identifying decision points and components of an effective advisory council. The workshop also helps staff — including patient centered care coordinators, patient advocates, and other employees involved in cultural transformation — to develop action plans for creating, maintaining, and sustaining a successful advisory council.



Throughout this report, Partnership Spotlights show how collaboration with organizations both within and outside of VA is helping to enhance care and services for Veterans. Transformation requires the insights of many partners that each plays a vital role in crafting a patient centered experience for Veterans.

The OPCC&CT and the Office of Information and Analytics (OIA) developed “What Surveys Tell Us About Patient Centered Care,” a presentation that shows VA staff how to find and use data about the Veteran experience — their perceptions of their care, VA facilities, and the quality of their visits — and emphasizes the vital role staff members have in shaping that experience. OPCC&CT is also developing a survey that asks patients about their experience with health care and the whole health model, to help our transformation to a patient centered culture.

“Every employee realizes that they can be patient centered in very simple ways.”

*—Sandy Robertson, Patient Centered Care Chief,
VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System*

Veteran Story:

GEORGE

**“This is the best thing I
do all day!”**

— *George, on
volunteering at the
Orlando VA Medical
Center*



Fostering **Evidence-Based Practices** to Support **Whole Health**

Following his military service during the Vietnam War, George was diagnosed with agoraphobia. For years he experienced panic attacks in public settings. After expressing his desire to better manage his condition, George accepted a position in the concierge program at the Orlando VA Medical Center. He gradually grew more comfortable interacting with his fellow Veterans. Thanks to his position on the concierge team and support from his mental health providers, George has experienced a vast improvement in his overall health and well-being.





Resources in this report include white papers, evidence maps, and presentations by field experts on subjects related to VA's transformation to a patient centered system of care. The OPCC&CT has also compiled more than 40 toolkits over the past two years, drawing on the experiences and results of innovations in VA facilities across the country. They describe the creation of healing gardens, in-patient facilities, and the integration of art as well as complementary therapies such as mindfulness, yoga, and tai chi. These toolkits offer valuable information you can use as your facility incorporates patient centered strong practices.

You can find a comprehensive breakdown of all research and resources through our Resource Navigator at [HealthforLife.vacloud.us/navigator](https://www.healthforlife.vacloud.us/navigator).

How far-reaching are the OPCC&CT's toolkits? These innovative practices have enhanced the care for more than:

- 90,000 Veteran patients
- 21,000 family members of Veterans
- 19,000 VA staff members
- 140 VA sites and clinics

In 2014, about 9 million Veterans were enrolled in the VA Health Care System, which comprises 167 medical centers, 863 community-based outpatient clinics, and more than 300 Vet Centers. Transforming a medical system of this magnitude requires extensive, ongoing communication and collaboration. Thanks to research conducted at VA medical centers throughout the country, we have a better understanding of the factors that affect Veterans' health as well as what it takes to successfully transform VA's health care system. Throughout this report are findings that attest to the benefits of various aspects of patient centered care, and our research into the most effective practices continues.

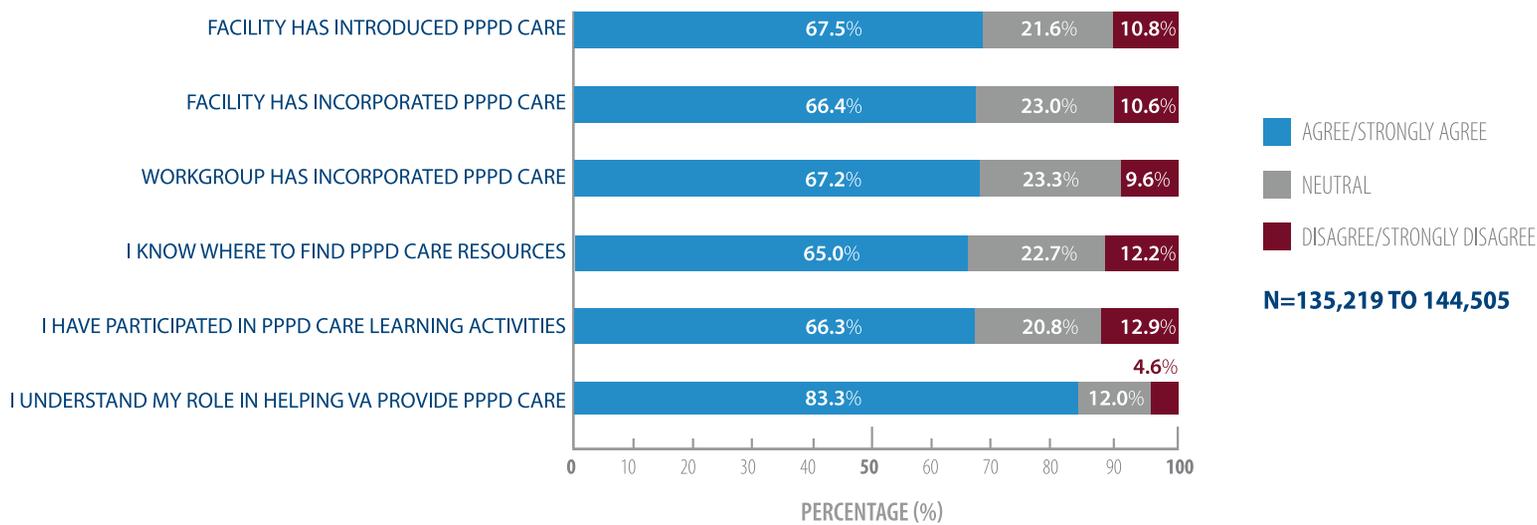
One important research study is assessing the extent of VHA staff awareness and advancement of a key element of VHA's strategic plan: to provide personalized, proactive and patient-driven health care to our Veterans. Based on responses from over 135,000 staff members to six new items in the VA All Employee Survey (AES), researchers compiled strong findings related to patient centered care. The AES findings show that awareness of the No. 1 National Strategic Priority is high across VA, and over 83 percent of AES respondents said they understand their role in providing personalized, proactive, and patient-driven health care. The results of this evaluation affirm that VA's delivery of care is moving in the right direction.

Opposite page top: Across the board, most All Employee Survey respondents reported not only being familiar with personalized, proactive, patient-driven (PPPD) care but understanding their role in providing this approach.

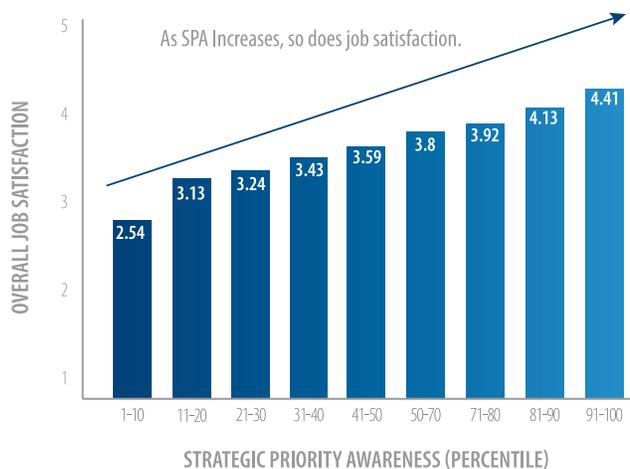
Opposite page bottom left: According to All Employee Survey results, employees who were highly aware of the National Strategic Priority tended to report greater overall job satisfaction.

Opposite page bottom right: Employees who were highly aware of the National Strategic Priority also tended to report lower rates of burnout.

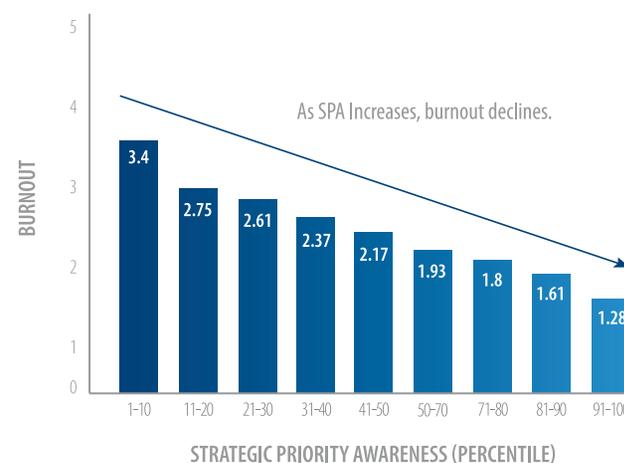
National Strategic Priority Awareness (SPA): Percentage of Agree, Neutral, and Disagree Responses by Question



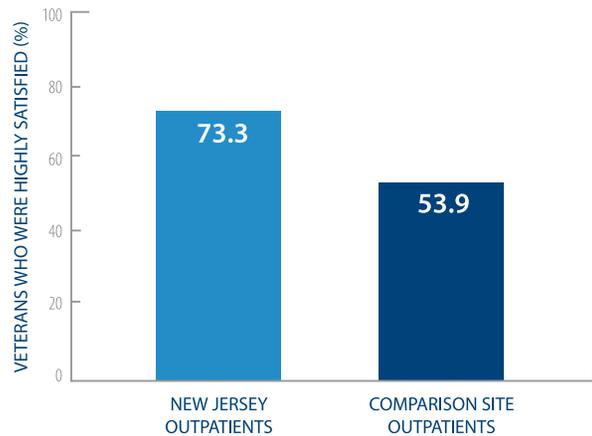
National Strategic Priority Awareness: Relationship to Overall Job Satisfaction



National Strategic Priority Awareness: Relationship to Burnout

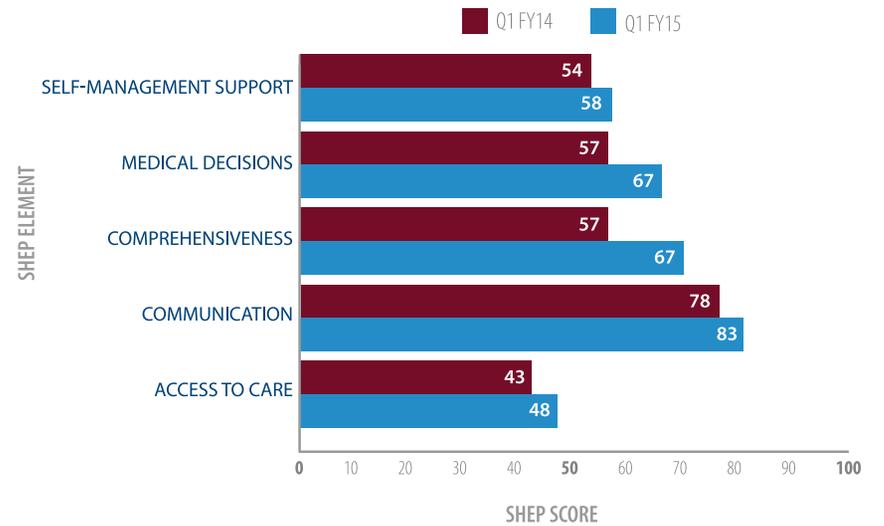


New Jersey Outpatient Satisfaction



New Jersey outpatients seen in the Center for Health and Wellness rated their experience with the top two categories of an 11-point scale 73 percent of the time, compared with 54 percent of patients giving the top two ratings at a comparison site.

Washington DC VA Medical Center: Trends Over Time



Our research does not stop there. The OPCC&CT has partnered with many facilities to determine the effectiveness of patient centered care practices and to identify opportunities to share lessons learned and implement elements of successful programs. Highlights of promising reports from facilities across the country include the following:

- The Southeast Louisiana Health Care System created the Kindness Project, an initiative that encourages respect for everyone in the facility. The project emphasizes staff well-being through employee aerobic exercise classes, yoga classes, walking tracks, and stress management workshops. The program's first year saw a 62 percent decrease in workplace disruptions and a 33 percent decrease in workplace stress complaints.
- By implementing patient centered practices, VA New Jersey Health Care System demonstrated notable improvements in staff-patient communication and collaboration in addition to overall patient satisfaction. The system's strategies include a Whole Health Clinical course and a Whole Health Coaching course for providers, and patient centered care training for all employees.

A patient survey conducted in 2014 compares Veterans' experiences at VA New Jersey Health Care System with Veterans' experiences at a comparison site. Patients reported significantly better provider communication and collaboration, and a better experience overall. The full report of the findings at the New Jersey Center of Innovation is found at Vaww.infoshare.va.gov/sites/opcc.

- By furthering development of its Integrative Health and Wellness program and promoting staff education and empowerment, the Washington DC VA Medical Center demonstrated notable improvements from Fiscal Year 2014 to 2015, as measured by the Survey of Healthcare Experience of Patients (SHEP).

These highlights reflect just some of the many patient centered practices taking place across the country. For a perspective of how many facilities have begun the transformation to patient centered care, take a look at the map on page 46.



Keep an eye out for a new video that chronicles patient experiences with the Integrated Health and Wellness program, coming soon to Vaww.infoshare.va.gov/sites/opcc.





Evidence Map:

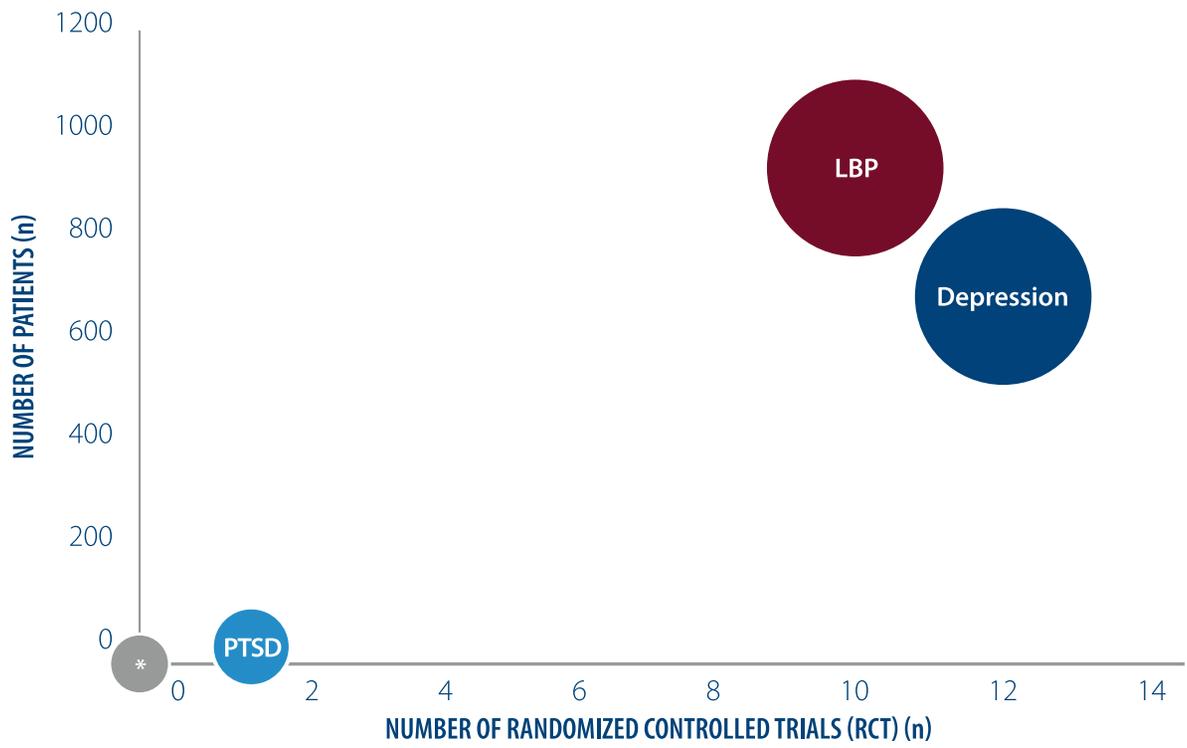
Yoga

Quality Enhancement Research Initiatives (QUERI) partnered with the OPCC&CT and Field Advisors on yoga to conduct an evidence map of published research that evaluates the effectiveness of yoga in preventing falls and treating lower back pain, mental illness, and insomnia. QUERI examined 23 studies published between 2008 and 2014 that included over 1,600 participants.

Yoga is a mind and body practice that combines physical postures, breathing techniques, and relaxation.

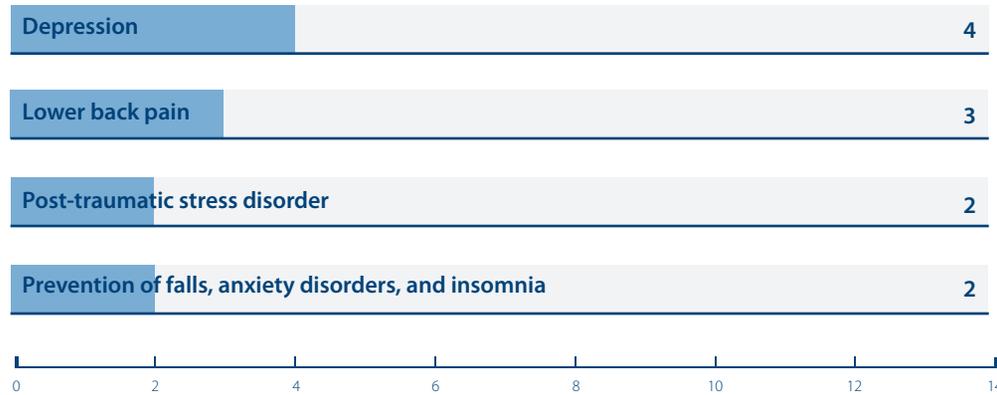
The evidence map of yoga illustrates yoga's potential for treating two VA priority health conditions: depressive symptoms and lower back pain.

Find the complete report on yoga through our Resource Navigator at HealthforLife.vacloud.us.

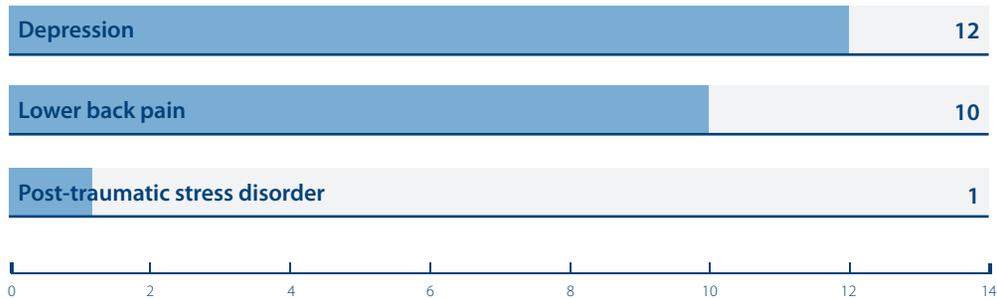


* Represents prevention of falls, generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), panic disorder (PD), and insomnia (no RCTs identified for any of these conditions).
 Number of RCTs/number of patients for the various other conditions represented were:
 1/8 for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), 10/956 for lower back pain (LBP); and 12/619 for depression.

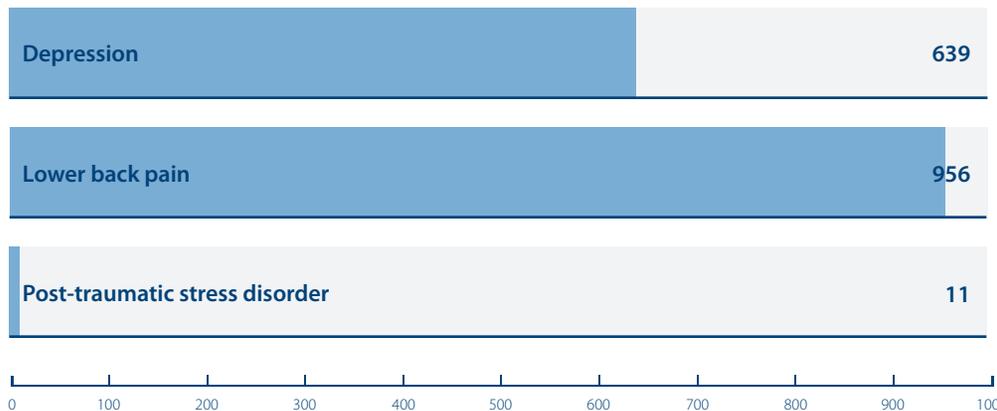
NUMBER OF SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS



NUMBER OF RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIALS



NUMBER OF PATIENTS



The OPCC&CT has worked with the following VA organizations to evaluate outcomes related to patient centered care:

- Health Services Research and Development
- QUERI
 - Center for Evaluating Patient Centered Care in the VA
 - Center for Evaluation of Practices and Experiences of Patient Centered Care
- Evidence-based Synthesis Program



Staff Story:

DR. ILANA SEIDEL

**“It’s not about me.
It’s not about what I
think is best. ... I have
a toolbox in which
there are specific skill
sets that would help
different people at
different times. So it’s
really whatever that
person in front of me
needs.”**

*— Dr. Ilana Seidel,
Integrative Medicine
Fellow, DC VAMC*



Experience and Innovation: Exploring the Domains of Transformation

Throughout her medical career, Dr. Ilana Seidel has been passionate about integrative health practices. She leads a class at Washington DC VA Medical Center that addresses Veterans' whole health by exploring what matters most to them and using health and wellness techniques such as osteopathy, Reiki, and stress-coping methods. Every day, Dr. Seidel demonstrates that reinforcing the personal innate capacity to heal with holistic approaches helps patients lead happier, healthier lives.





To propel VA on its journey to a personalized, proactive, patient-driven care system, the OPCC&CT is building a structure that includes VA staff members like you who are eager to make the greatest possible positive impact on Veterans' lives. Changing how we operate at an organizational level, including how we measure patient outcomes, will be an important part of this transformation. A whole health care system bases its institutional success on empowering Veterans to live their best lives.

Identifying Essential Domains of Transformation

The white paper titled "Lessons Learned From the Field" examines the seven domains that may support or inhibit facilities' transformation to whole health care. To evaluate each facility's relative successes and pinpoint areas for improvement, the OPCC&CT evaluates every step in the transformation. Researchers' site visits include interviews with all levels of staff, facility tours, and observation of care and delivery processes.

Following are the main findings pertaining to each of the seven domains. These domains overlap with each other, and processes in one area inevitably depend on and affect the processes in the others.

Leadership

Leaders who are dedicated to patient centered care are crucial to organizational transformation. To advance patient centered care in their facilities, leaders need to:

- Encourage staff to try novel ways of providing patient centered care.
- Solicit and act on feedback from staff; asking for ideas results in new potential actions, and a staff recognized for its thinking has better morale.
- Express support for patient centered care openly, constantly, and frequently, and model patient centered care in everything they do.

▶ Take a look at how VA leadership and staff have applied whole health concepts to their delivery of care in the video "Why Transform: Champions on Health for Life" at www.va.gov/patientcenteredcare/multimedia-and-resources.asp.

Engaging Veteran Patients and Family Members

Gathering opinions and ideas from patients and their loved ones, both formally and informally, is an essential to cultural transformation. The study found:

- The act of asking for and listening to Veteran preferences for care can help staff members establish strong relationships with patients.
- Engaging Veterans to participate in innovations can be accomplished through marketing both within and outside of the facility.

Enculturating Staff

Enculturation means getting staff to understand and become advocates for cultural transformation and its implementation. The practice of whole health care relies on staffwide buy-in, which in turn relies on each VA worker's internalizing patient centered care concepts. Some ways to achieve organizational buy-in include:

- Providing trainings that emphasize that patient centered care is a natural extension of current attitudes and practices that lead to positive health outcomes. In other words, patient centered care is not a temporary shift, but rather a part of VA's permanent transformation.
- Providing trainings that encourage staff to incorporate patient centered care into daily practices, starting with asking Veterans "What matters to you?" rather than "What's the matter?"
- Delivering messaging using multiple methods, such as email, bulletin boards, and signage.



To account for the Voice of the Veteran, **El Paso Health Care System (VISN 18)** participated in facilitated listening sessions in early Fiscal Year 2014. Seventy-five Veterans, nine family members, 65 staff members, and eight external stakeholders participated in these sessions.

To support the transformation from sick care to whole health care, **Central Texas Veterans Health Care System (VISN 17)** has provided all employees with customer service training. The system's leadership implemented a service-level recovery program that identifies a customer service representative within each service to provide ongoing training in their respective workgroups.



The evolution of the **Veterans Experience Program (VEP)** marks another organizational change at VHA, as the **OPCC&CT** has developed a **VEP patient advocacy engagement**. The **OPCC&CT Field-based Implementation Team (FIT)** members lead this engagement, meeting with leaders and staff to create a proactive approach to achieving a positive Veteran experience. This has helped transition patient advocacy work into a more comprehensive approach to treating Veterans.



Hear about some innovative processes that have been developed throughout the field in the video *“Health for Life: Innovative Practices in Patient Centered Care”* at www.va.gov/patientcenteredcare/multimedia-and-resources.asp.



VA New England Healthcare System (VISN 1) created a specialized task force to address patient centered care priorities, developing a VISN-wide inventory of local VA and community whole health care resources. This inventory supports staff efforts to provide personalized, proactive, patient-driven health care by allowing them to direct Veterans to resources that can help support their health goals.

Fostering Innovations

Innovations come from all levels of personnel, including senior management, middle management, and those on the front lines of health care. That’s why success requires both universal involvement and open communication among all parties. Following are strong factors in successfully creating and incorporating innovative practices:

- An innovation that starts with senior leadership requires champions at the middle management level and involvement among all staff members.
- An implementation strategy that begins with simple, achievable innovations can pave the way for subsequent innovations.

Staff Roles and Priorities

Staff may find it difficult to incorporate patient centered care into daily practices. The study found some useful ways to overcome this challenge:

- Formally integrating patient centered care practices into all care practices makes it easier for staff to adopt in their routines.
- Performance measures that reflect patient centered care encourage staff members to place a priority on whole health care practices.



The Role of VA Organizational Structures and Processes

In their comments, staff members made it clear that organizational structures can be barriers to implementing patient centered care innovations. Furthermore, multiple initiatives can cause confusion if they are introduced simultaneously, especially if the staff views them as competing. To overcome these challenges, the study suggests the following:

- Encourage and foster flexibility within the rules of VA to pursue innovation.
- Capitalize on the momentum of other initiatives that complement patient centered care.

Implementing Environment of Care Changes

Changing the physical environment at VA facilities represents a significant investment of time and money — but patient centered care is most effective in an environment designed to support it. Following are observations from the study relating to a patient centered care environment:

- Aesthetic changes are most effective when accompanied by functional changes that promote patient-provider interaction.
- Physical changes can have a positive impact on both Veterans and staff.

Successful implementation of patient centered practices and concepts requires leadership to acknowledge all seven domains, and understand the ways they intersect with one another. For example, the process of fostering innovations depends on all levels of staff buying in to cultural transformation, which in turn is affected by the role of leadership.

To know more about these domains, read “Lessons Learned From the Field” and view a presentation on “How to Operationalize Lessons Learned” at Vawww.infoshare.va.gov/sites/opcc.

The OPCC&CT is developing a guidebook with Stages of Transformation and a road map to support medical centers in furthering their cultural transformation.

The position of patient centered care “coach” has been established at the **Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center in Indianapolis (VISN 11)**. The facility uses this position to support the care team in the delivery of personalized, proactive, patient-driven care by coordinating the patient’s feedback so everyone on the team know what is most important to him or her. This post has led to fewer patient advocate complaints, and will become a full-time position when the pilot is completed at the end of Fiscal Year 2015.



Tomah VA Medical Center (VISN 12) received a grant to enhance the facility’s status as a healing environment. The facility developed a courtyard with features that include a walking path, outdoor dining deck, exercise stations, pergolas, plants, and trees.





Evidence Map:

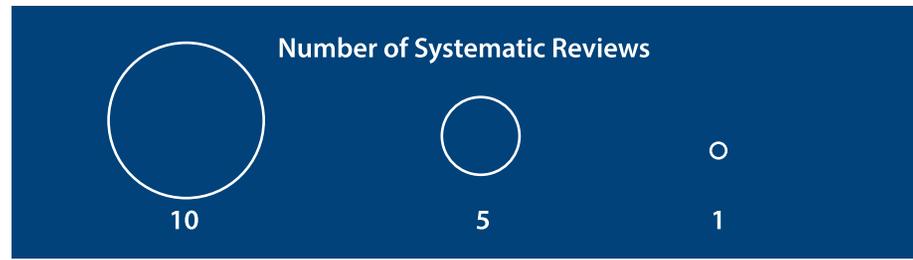
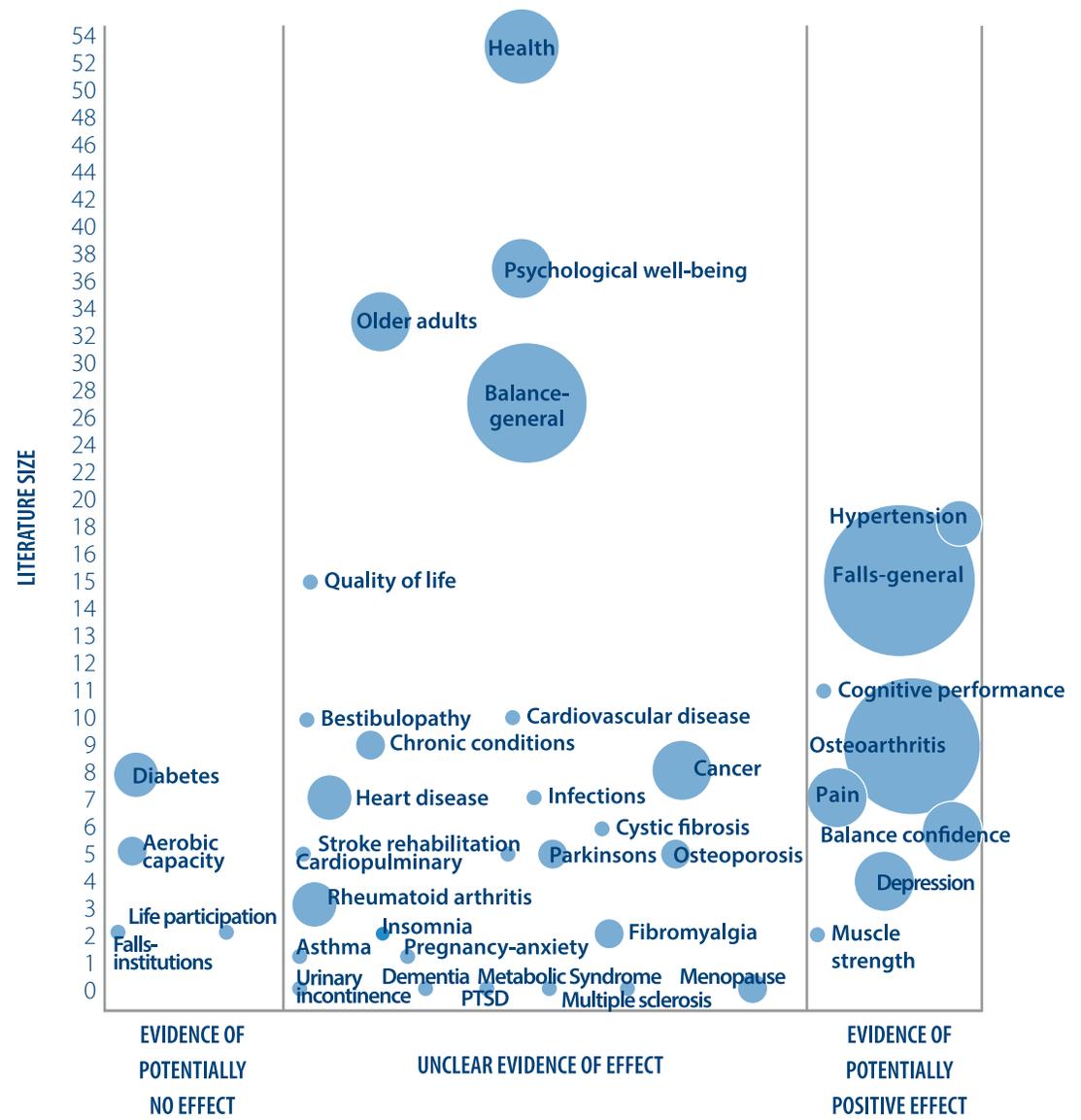
Tai Chi

QUERI analyzed the reviews of hundreds of studies performed between 1999 and 2014 that evaluated tai chi in treating a variety of conditions.

Tai chi is sometimes referred to as “moving meditation.” Practitioners move their bodies slowly, gently, and with awareness while breathing deeply.

The evidence map of tai chi illustrates its potential for preventing falls and building balance confidence, as well as relieving osteoarthritis, depression, and pain.

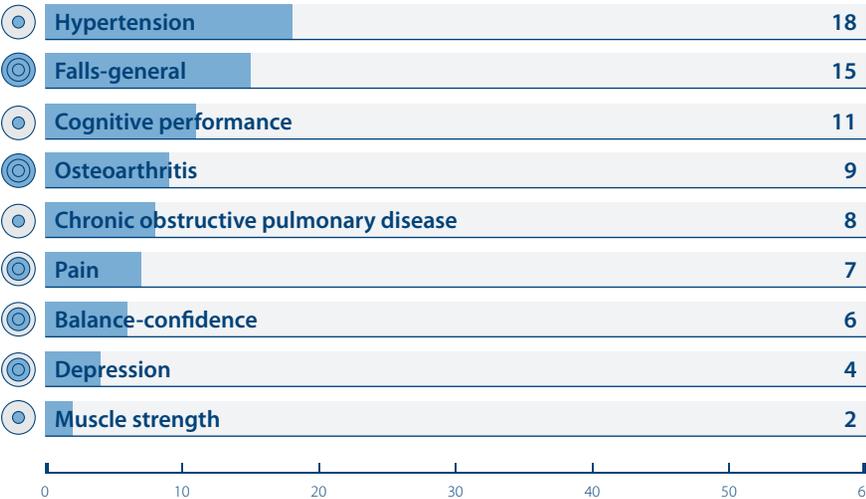
Find the complete report on tai chi through our Resource Navigator at HealthforLife.vacloud.us.



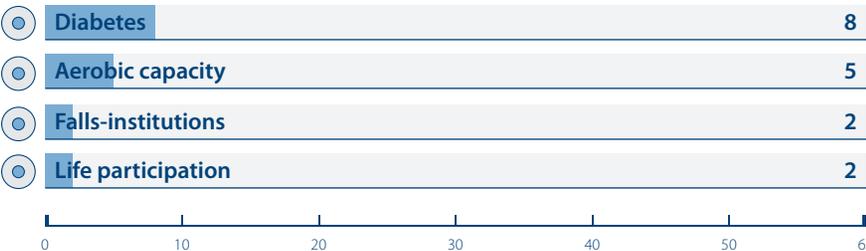
Evidence Confidence Level: LOW | MEDIUM | HIGH

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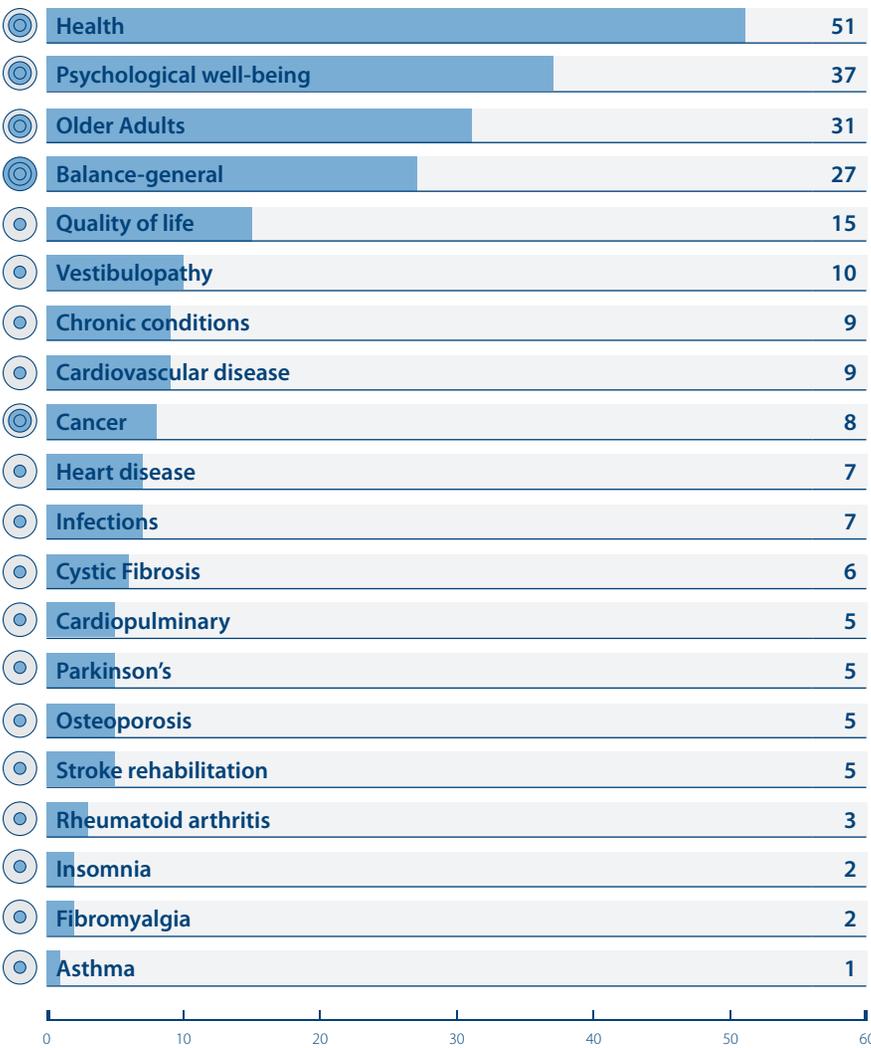
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Veteran Story:

VICTOR

“They really care about us, and I can feel it. ... You can fool me for a little while, but you can’t fool me for a long period of time. They care about us. They care about the Veterans.”

— *Victor*



Looking Ahead: The Future of Patient Centered Care at VA

Victor joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1968 and deployed to Vietnam. Years later, he struggled to manage his post-traumatic stress disorder on his own. His substance abuse alarmed two friends — fellow Veterans who encouraged him to return to VA. After prescribed medications didn't help, Victor and his care providers worked together to form an integrative approach to his well-being. Victor's strong bond with his nurse, Terry, helped him overcome his initial skepticism, and Terry introduced him to integrative programs. With constant practice, Victor has been able to manage his stress and find peace. Now, he feels he has control of his life and is working every day to be a good father to his daughter and to take care of his parents.



VA is transforming an entire medical system to start with the whole person rather than the disease, to partner with the Veteran to fully explore what they value, and to align their health care with those values. This transformation requires performing comprehensive research and analysis, facilitating education in the field, and supporting the implementation of whole health programs. To make the transformation a reality, the first step is to educate both VA staff and Veterans.

Education and Training: How Clinicians Can Incorporate Whole Health in Day-to-Day Practice

We have seen that changing the conversation and using a whole health approach can lead to positive patient outcomes: Veterans like David, George, and Lana — whose stories appear in this report — can attest to that. Our next step as an organization is to bring a patient centered approach to the care of every Veteran who enters our doors. To reach that goal, all parties involved in every aspect of care need to be educated about personalized, proactive, patient-driven care. Whether you are just starting or further along in your journey, it is important for you and those around you to learn how to practice Veteran-centric care.

Some VA leaders have asked the OPCC&CT to offer whole health courses at their facilities, including Whole Health Coaching, Cultural Compassion Training, and Whole Health Foundations. You can also consult the resources referenced in this document to learn more about all aspects of patient centered care; more resources can be found at [Vawww.infoshare.va.gov/sites/opcc](http://www.infoshare.va.gov/sites/opcc).

Regardless of your role at VA, you can start incorporating the ideals of patient centered care into your work with Veterans — today. Transformation takes time, but patient centered care begins with a simple conversation with the Veterans you care for. With your support and passion, VA can provide Veterans with the personalized, proactive, and patient-driven care that they deserve.

The OPCC&CT has developed a series of field-based engagements and team consultative services, whole health educational classes, and comprehensive online curricula featuring 36 educational modules and over 160 clinical tools that lay out the basics needed to start transforming health care.

Field-Based Implementation Team Consultative Services

The OPCC&CT's Field-based Implementation Team (FIT) partners continue to support the field by providing resources and onsite engagements to assist in the transformation to patient centered care. The OPCC&CT offers workshops and specialty engagements for facilities that want to incorporate patient centered practices. The theme for FIT partners in 2015 is Moving From Inspiration to Implementation, and they provide tools to help your facility implement patient centered care practices.

VHA Patient Centered Care (PCC) Core Engagements and Consultative Services: These core offerings are designed to build a strong organizational foundation for PCC with an emphasis on leadership vision and staff engagement in transforming both the experience and the practice of care.

CONSULTATIVE SERVICE	AUDIENCE	GOAL
ELES: Executive Leadership Engagement Session	Executive team and PCC point of contact	Help senior leaders articulate and align their vision of PCC. Identify individual and organizational assets and resources to bring their PCC vision to reality. Elevate the voice of the Veteran through a dynamic Veteran panel discussion. Collect information to enrich and inform future steps in this journey.
IS: Information Session	All staff, volunteers, and Veterans	Introduce the VHA model of PCC to staff, volunteers, and Veterans at various venues in partnership with executive leadership. Share PCC initiatives that are underway. Inspire staff to get involved. Train facility staff to deliver information sessions.
SLES: Supervisor Leadership Engagement Session	Service chiefs and supervisors	Connect early with select supervisors in a small group session of about 15 attendees, aiming to increase their understanding of promoting and fostering frontline employee involvement with PCC programs and initiatives. Elevate the voice of the Veteran through a dynamic Veteran panel discussion.
LES: Leadership Engagement Session	Leaders at all levels	Immerse leaders in a learning process that defines leadership in a PCC environment and prepare them to lead the initiative by engaging them as champions for PCC.
SES: Staff Engagement Session and Facilitator Workshop	Select staff specifically chosen to facilitate the Staff Engagement Workshop	Create awareness of PCC and unity among staff members by sharing the patient perspective and inspiring staff to engage in the journey as facilitators.



The Whole Health Coaching course has been delivered at 22 facilities to over 663 participants, including 455 staff in 2014. Extensive evaluations of course participants demonstrated that the Whole Health Coaching course improved preparedness, self-efficacy, and use of health coaching skills among participants, and positive attitudes toward patient centered care showed a significant increase after the course. The study of this program is among the first to suggest that training health care professionals in health coaching can support patient centered care initiatives and practices.

Qualitative and quantitative data showed that the facilitators acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver the program effectively. Participants demonstrated significant improvements in all areas assessed, including:

- Self-efficacy to engage in whole health approaches and self-care strategies
- Knowledge of whole health approaches and self-care strategies
- Attitudes about peer group programs on self-care strategies
- Intentions to engage in whole health approaches and self-care strategies
- Health behaviors
- Meaning and purpose in life
- Perceived stress
- Emotional and informational support

Said one Veteran: “Nine weeks ago I was thinking about getting a job. Today I’m working at a job, so I kept my goal focused on what I had to do.”

VHA PCC Structured Workshops and Consultative Services: These PCC structure workshops and training sessions are designed to augment support provided by the OPCC&CT Field Implementation Team (FIT) coaches/mentors and assist VISNs and facilities in implementing specific strategies around organizational infrastructure.

CONSULTATIVE SERVICE	AUDIENCE	GOAL
SSLW: Six Sigma Lean Workshop	PCC coordinators and process improvement coordinators	Assist facilities in aligning their patient centered culture with their culture of improvement. Focus on organizational structure, methodology, and implementation tactics.
PFACW: Patient Family Advisory Council Workshop	Patient advocates, PCC coordinators, and other staff involved in PFAC	Assist facilities in identifying key decision points/components of an effective advisory council. Develop action plans for creating, maintaining, sustaining, and growing an advisory council. Provide guidance on use of the Patient Advisory Council Toolkit.
FLS: Facilitated Listening Session & Facilitator Skills Training	Staff involved in facilitating listening sessions or other engagements	Provide guidance on planning, scheduling, facilitating, and analyzing data from facilitated listening sessions as an approach to engaging the voice of the Veteran. Participants will obtain skills on how to deal with challenging behaviors and practice facilitating listening sessions.
VPCC: VISN Patient Centered Care Champion	Selected staff across VISN facilities	Support a VISN-wide approach to PCC. PCC champions are trained to partner with OPCC&CT FITs to facilitate core engagements and then carry on work.

VHA PCC Whole Health Practice Education and Consultative Services: Whole health is patient centered care that affirms the importance of the relationship and partnership between patients and their community of providers. The focus is on empowering the self-healing mechanisms within the whole person while co-creating a personalized, proactive, patient-driven experience. This approach is informed by evidence and makes use of all appropriate therapeutic approaches, health care professionals, and disciplines to achieve optimal health and well-being.

EDUCATION OFFERING	AUDIENCE	GOAL
WHCC: Whole Health Clinical (Change the Conversation) Course	VHA clinicians	Advance skills in the delivery of personalized, proactive, and patient-driven care. Expand the conversation beyond treating symptoms and disease to optimizing health and well-being.
WHC: Whole Health Coaching	VHA clinicians and non-clinicians, and peer support specialists	Provide intensive Whole Health Coaching training, practice, and mentoring to develop coaching skills for clinicians and staff that honors the Veteran's health goals.
Whole Health Group-Based Program	Veterans and families	Over the course of this Veteran peer-led nine-week program, participants learn about how to take care of their health and live consistently with what is most important to them. Veterans reflect on their health in a different way and gain skills and tools to improve their health and well-being in a supportive group setting.

Since the Whole Health: Change the Conversation course was started, 32 VAMCs across 17 VISNs have participated in evaluations, training a total of at least 1,571 staff and including 980 in 2014. Course evaluations indicated positive changes in all outcomes at the two-month follow-up, including attitudes and self-efficacy to engage in integrative medicine strategies, perceived preparedness to discuss non-pharmaceutical approaches to care with Veterans, and greater engagement in integrative medicine behaviors during clinical encounters. Participants from sites selected for in-depth follow-up all noted that integrative health strategies and modalities, mindful awareness strategies, and self-care strategies were being integrated into clinical encounters. A theme across all sites was that the course helped to build momentum and validate the direction that leadership and staff were already going, helped bring together a picture of what could be achieved, and provided a platform to promote further efforts to change behavior.

Results of the Whole Health Clinical course were extremely promising:

- Seen by comparing survey results from before and two months after the course, respondents reported that the WHCC significantly affected how they practiced medicine or delivered care.
- 90% of these approaches were well received by Veterans, with providers reporting that Veterans were more “positive,” “engaged,” “receptive,” and “open.”
- 64% of respondents provided examples of how they were integrating whole health into their own lives.





RED ROSE GARDEN



VHA PCC Veteran Experience Engagements and Consultative Services: The Veteran Experience engagements and workshop are designed to augment support provided by OPCC&CT FIT coaches/mentors and provide strategies and tools that facilities can use to improve the experience of care, with an emphasis on creating healing environments and increasing Veteran satisfaction.

CONSULTATIVE SERVICE	AUDIENCE	GOAL
HEE: Healing Environment Engagement	Leadership, engineering, clinicians, patient advocates, PCC coordinators, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and Canteen Services	Provide leadership and EMS/engineering staff with tools and resources to assess the facility for patient centeredness. Also assist facilities in planning renovations and additions based on patient centered principles, incorporating Veteran and staff input.
HEW: Healing Environment Workshop	Leadership, engineering, and clinicians	Experience a healing environment and learn about evidence-based design, organizational structures, resources, outcome measures, and innovations for interior and exterior design. Participate in a mock design charrette for the area being redesigned.
VEPE: Veteran Experience Program Engagement	Patient advocates, PCC coordinators, and others tailored to meet facility's structure	Meet with leaders and staff to develop actions to create a proactive approach to achieving a positive Veteran experience. Assist in the transition of the patient advocate program into a comprehensive Veteran Experience Program.
PESE: Patient Experience Satisfaction Engagement	Leadership and PCC coordinators	Conduct a deep dive into facility patient satisfaction data (SHEP, Patient Complaint, etc.) and other data to pinpoint opportunities to improve the Veteran experience. Develop priority interventions and track performance over time.

VHA PCC Assessment and Sustainment Tools and Consultative Services: These engagements complement OPCC&CT core engagements by assessing where facilities are in the change process and building facility-specific plans and strategies to enhance the practice and experience of care.

CONSULTATIVE SERVICE	AUDIENCE	GOAL
CTA: Cultural Transformation Assessment	Executive leadership team, strategic planning groups, and various stakeholders	Through facilitated listening sessions, establish a collaborative process that captures the voice of Veterans, family members, staff, and other stakeholders, and identifies priorities and implementation strategies for advancing the facility's patient centered care journey.
POCA: Phases of Change Assessment	All staff	Provide guidance to help leaders gain a broad picture of where their organization is in its transformation effort, down to the service line. This virtual assessment is completed in partnership with the National Center for Organizational Development (NCOD).
CP: Checkpoint	Various stakeholder groups	Assess the status of patient centered care and cultural transformation initiatives, using a variety of tools including the guided self-assessment, facilitated listening sessions, and shadowing. Provide feedback and recommendations for next steps.
SS: Shadowing Session	Any service	Provide a comprehensive report on the Veteran experience based on shadowing of Veterans and staff using the health care system. Use a structured process followed by written feedback. Teach the techniques of shadowing as an action-oriented approach to create a patient centered perspective.





The Whole Health Online Library includes VHA peer-reviewed online modules, 34 educational overviews, and 161 clinical tools, available to VA clinicians across the country.

The OPCC&CT and the National Center for Organizational Development (NCOD) began a new partnership at Lexington VA Medical Center, combining patient centered care engagement sessions with the NCOD Executive Team Assessment. Together they engaged in team-building with the goal of creating a patient centered care vision and culture. So far this collaboration has allowed Lexington VA Medical Center to increase internal cohesion.

VHA PCC Role-Based Engagements and Consultative Services: These engagements are targeted for specific staff audiences and emphasize the role of each group in the facility's PCC journey.

CONSULTATIVE SERVICE	AUDIENCE	GOAL
PHPC: Personal Health Planning Consultation	Any VHA facility interested and/or engaged in personal health planning in its approach to whole health	Develop facility-specific strategies to implement and enhance personal health planning. Experts assist in the planning, preparation, deployment, and evaluation of the developed strategies, including a group based-peer-led program to address whole health.
NE: Nurse Engagement	Nursing staff	Provide nursing staff with an experience in whole health, including active listening and use of stories to reconnect with the Veteran experience and create deeper relationships.
PE: Provider Engagement	Staff in areas such as Patient-Aligned Care Team (PACT), mental health, or primary care	Provide an overview of whole health with a focus on tools and tips to change the conversation and partner with Veterans in their journeys toward health and well-being. This engagement may be co-led by a clinical champion.
AE: Administrative Engagement	Administrative, EMS, or engineering staff	Provide frontline staff with training that connects them with the Veteran experience and customer service. Enhance understanding of the VHA model of PCC, the importance of listening skills, and storytelling. Tailored for specific groups (EMS, Canteen Services, Medical Support Assistant, etc.).



Community of Practice Calls

The OPCC&CT hosts periodic calls to support VA’s cultural transformation from the convenience of your phone. You can join the conversation via any of the calls listed below. Keep in mind that these calls are all recorded, so you can listen at a time that works for you. For more information, go to <http://vawww.infoshare.va.gov/sites/OPCC/COP/default.aspx>.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE CALL	TARGET AUDIENCE
Integrative Health	VA employees interested in integrative health modalities for Veterans
Patient Centered Care (PCC)	PCC coordinators; staff seeking to advance their PCC initiatives
Personal Health Planning (PHP): MyStory/Personal Health Inventory (PHI)	All VHA staff using the PHI and staff at sites that want to begin using the PHI
Patient Advocacy/Veterans Experience Program	All patient advocates and experience coordinators
Interactive Patient Care (IPC)	Facility Points of Contact at sites implementing IPC
PCC Coordinators at FIT-Engaged Sites	Points of Contact and staff at sites where FIT partners are engaged
Whole Health: Continuing the Conversation	Participants in the Whole Health: Change the Conversation Clinical course

To gauge the breadth and depth of FIT engagements throughout the country, take a look at the map on the following page.

Patient Centered Care In Action

OPCC&CT Activity Across the Country

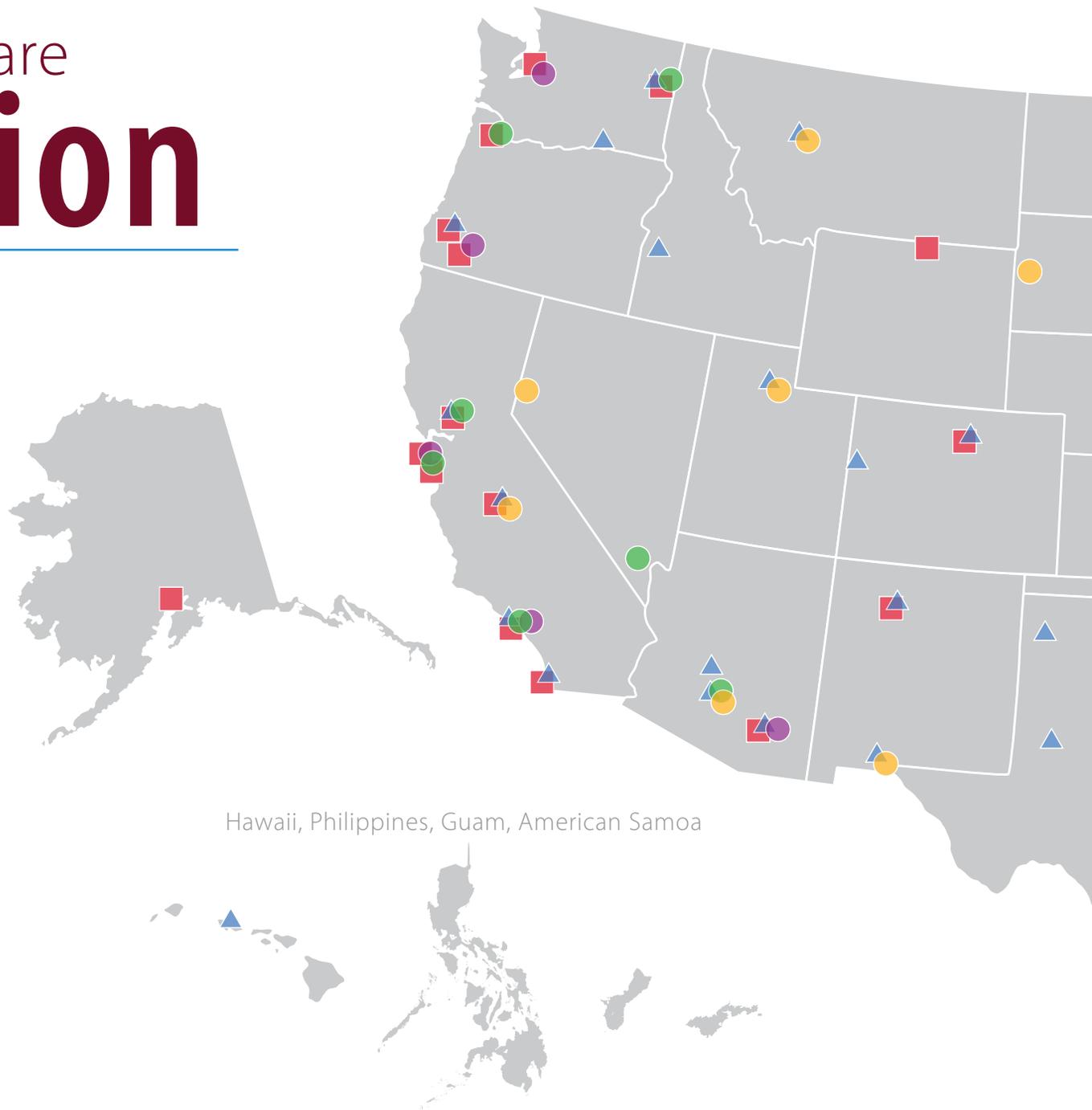
Since 2010, the OPCC&CT has funded more than 280 grants at 79 VA medical centers to support enhancement of the practice of whole health and the experience of health care in VHA.

32 VAMCs across 17 VISNs have participated in the Whole Health Clinical course, training at least 1,571 staff, including 980 in 2014.

22 VAMCs have participated in the Whole Health Coaching course, training at least 663 staff, including 455 in 2014.

292 staff at more than 19 VISNs have attended the Veteran Experience training.

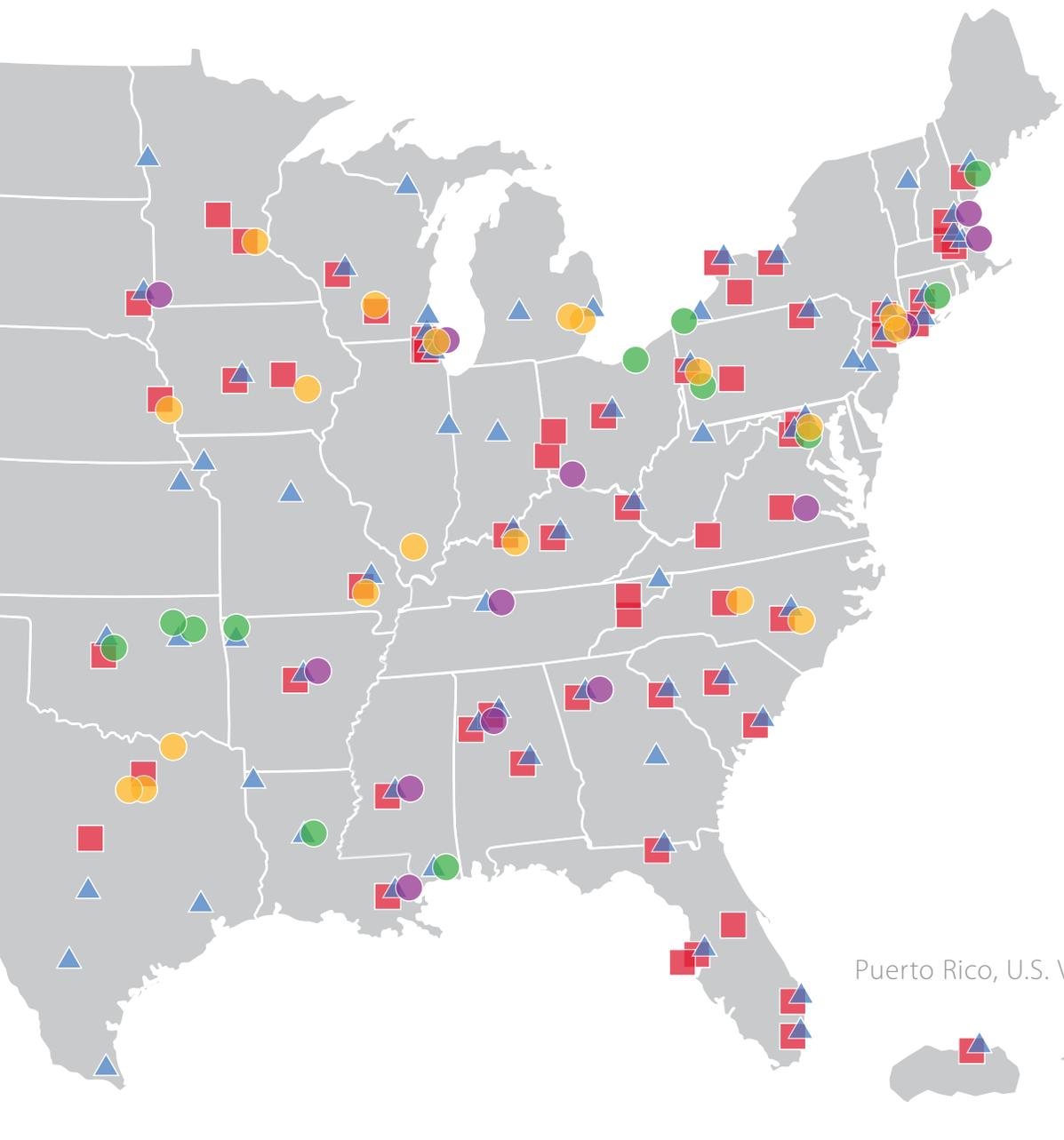
Over 70 percent of VA Medical Centers have participated in a Field-based Implementation Team (FIT) engagement.



Map Key

Patient centered care activity at VA facilities throughout VHA facilities.

- FIT Engagements
- ▲ OPCC&CT Grants
- Whole Health Clinical Course
- Whole Health Coaching Course
- Whole Health Clinical & Coaching Courses



See more online at healthforlife.vacloud.us

Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands

Veteran Story:

JAMIE AND PATRICK

“I was able to open up to my wife in ways I never thought possible.”

— *Patrick*



To watch a video about the Warrior to Soul Mate workshop, go to healthforlife.vacloud.us/index.php/multimedia

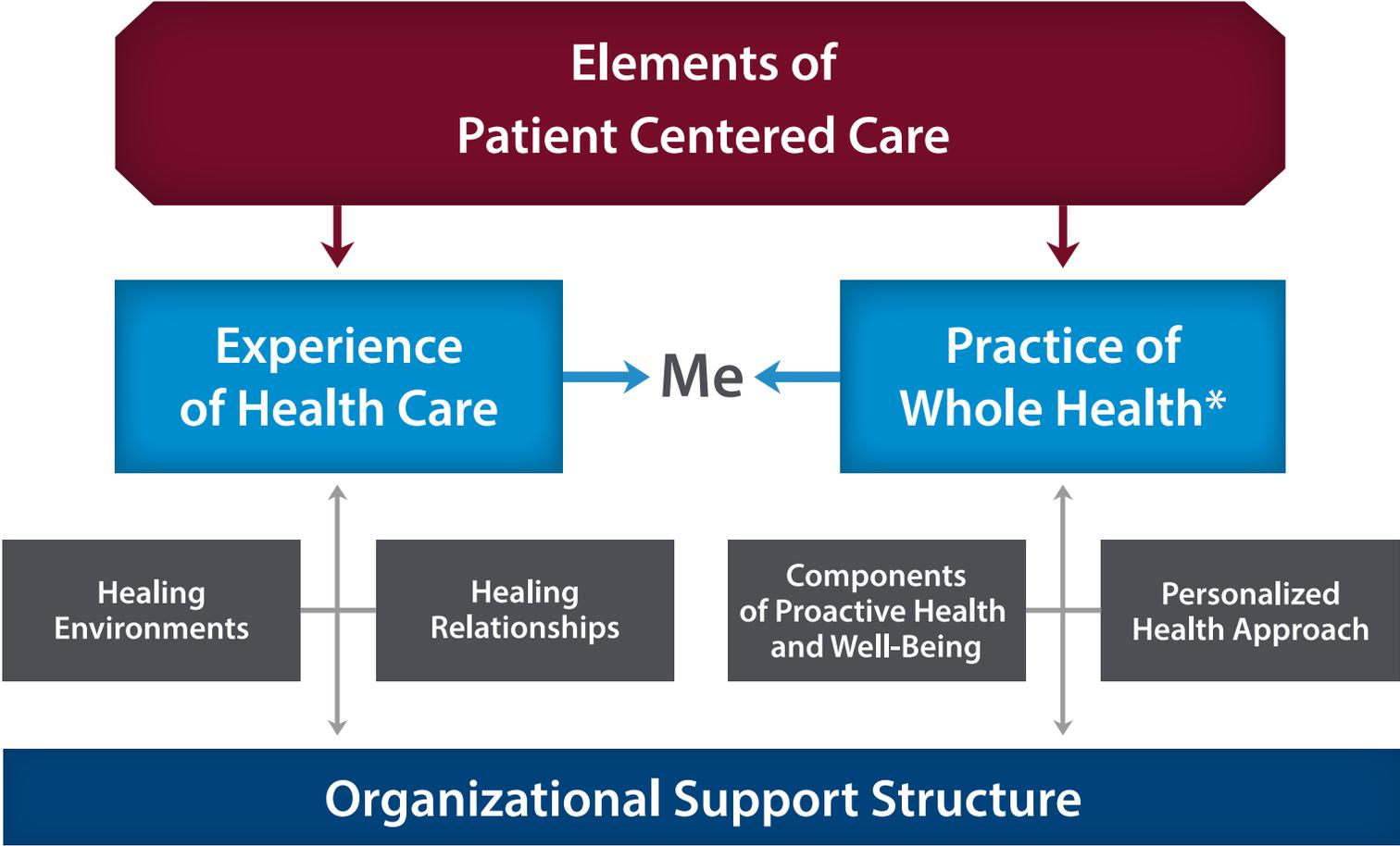
Bringing the Elements of **Patient Centered Care to Life**

Jamie and Patrick, a married couple who are both active members of the Indiana National Guard, were deployed overseas. Patrick's increasing bouts of anger led to tension between him and his wife, driving them to live apart and speak only to establish visitation times for their children. Then Jamie and Patrick attended a Warrior to Soul Mate (W2SM) workshop at their local VA clinic, where they learned to listen to each other empathetically. They are living together again, their ability to communicate strengthened by techniques they learned from W2SM. By identifying and committing to what matters most to them, Jamie and Patrick now enjoy life at home and a bond that has never been stronger.



Now, let's explore the values and principles that inform VA's transformation and what a whole health care model looks like when it is brought to life within and outside of a VA facility.

To foster a health care system that leads patients to their best possible health, VHA is committed to a model of care that is personalized, proactive, and patient-driven.



*Personalized, Proactive, Patient-Driven Care

These principles are infused throughout the patient centered model of care. The Elements of Patient Centered Care model explains what patient centered care means for patients and providers and shows how VA is changing the practice and experience of care to support Veterans' whole health.

You have seen what it takes to transform an organization on the scale of VA's health care network. The OPCC&CT is supporting programs and training to bring this model of care to life at VA. Below you will see how the aspects of this model are being put into practice at facilities across the country.

Enhancing the Experience of Health Care

Every element of someone's experience with health care — including relationships with health care providers and the environment of the facility — can contribute to an overall positive impact on healing. To create an optimal experience of care, we must work with patients to see through their eyes, from the moment they walk through door at VA to when they leave, including every step of their care along the way.

Healing Environments

VA is changing the experience of a traditional health care. Facilities are working to create and maintain environments at each facility that are relaxing and comfortable for Veterans, families, and staff.

The health care setting provides many opportunities to give patients peace of mind to focus on what matters to them. Healing environments comprise:

- *Architecture and Interior Design:* The variety of spaces provided, be it rooms or welcoming hallways, and the look and feel of each individual space
- *Grounds and External Environment:* Areas for exercise, relaxation, or simply taking in nature
- *Food Services and Dining:* Programs and resources for patients and staff to support their healthful eating habits and fuel them in their journey to well-being
- *Sensory Features:* Methods designed to soothe the senses by limiting the negative (such as noise reduction programs) and increasing the positive (such as aromatherapy and sounds that promote relaxation)
- *Amenities:* The convenience of parking shuttles, the availability of Wi-Fi, and more

Examples of what VA is doing to reduce stress and improve facilities include:

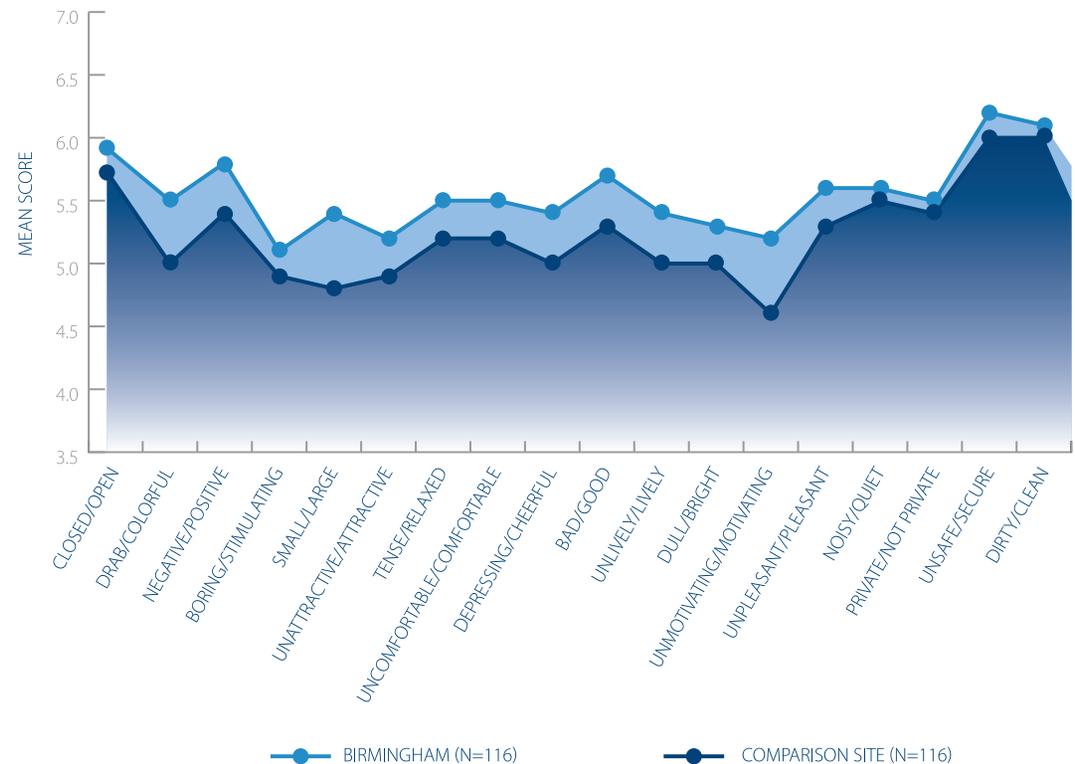
- Creating a Health and Wellness Center. (*New Jersey*)
- Presenting a holiday-time concert by a professional string quartet. (*Colorado*)
- Starting a "Silent Night" program to help improve patients' sleep. (*Texas*)
- Establishing a "No Passing Zone" to ensure prompt customer service (*Washington, DC*)

Birmingham – Comparison Site Outpatient Surveys

To evaluate the effectiveness of patient centered factors at VA facilities, the OPCC&CT surveyed patients at the recently renovated Birmingham, Alabama VA Medical Center. Patients rated the physical environment and satisfaction with the experience significantly higher at the medical center compared with a control site. Over half of Birmingham Veterans rated their most recent visit in the top two categories of an 11-point scale, compared with about 36 percent of patients giving the highest ratings at a comparison site. In fact, across 18 environmental variables in the survey, Birmingham consistently received higher ratings for each variable than the control site counterparts received. This study suggests that a more positive care environment is associated with more positive perception of care.

To read more about this study, go to
[Vaww.infoshare.va.gov/sites/opcc](http://www.infoshare.va.gov/sites/opcc).

Veteran Ratings of the Physical Environment Were Consistently Higher at Birmingham than at the Comparison Site



Healing Environments: Selected Resources

Creating a Healing Environment

Many factors go into creating a healing environment. From information gathering to planning and measuring outcomes, VA provides resources to move your facility in the right direction. (Resources: Toolkit, Web Presentation)

Enhancing In-patient Mental Health Spaces

VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System and VA North Texas Health Care System executed sizable renovations, demonstrating how facilities can convert in-patient rooms into patient centered healing environments. (Resources: Toolkit, Web Presentation)

Art and Memorabilia

The art throughout your facility is a detail that is easy to overlook, yet essential for creating a positive healing environment. When combined with way-finding cues and signage, art can be a powerful resource to improve both navigation and aesthetics at your facility. (Resources: Toolkit, Web Presentation)

Way-Finding

How easy it is for people to find their way around — way-finding — has a powerful effect on Veterans' experience. It is important to minimize confusion and discomfort as patients move throughout the interior and exterior space. (Resources: Toolkit, Web Presentation)

Healing Gardens

Healing gardens are an example of a research-based environmental feature that can promote health and well-being of patients, staff, and visitors. Visibility, accessibility, and privacy are just a few of the considerations that go into creating peaceful healing gardens. (Resources: Toolkit, Web Presentation)

Sleep Menu

The chance to rest and recharge is so important to health and healing, and yet is often difficult. To cater to each patient's sleep needs, many VA facilities offer a menu that covers an expansive list of preferences.

All resources listed here can be accessed on our Resource Navigator at HealthforLife.vacloud.us/navigator.



The Environmental Services Program has developed a comprehensive training program to ensure that each employee understands the importance of their role in creating healing relationships with the patients they serve.



The OPCC&CT is partnering with Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) to explore ways that volunteers can support VA's transformation to patient centered care. The OPCC&CT participated in VAVS' April 2015 conference to see how volunteers can help VA deliver whole health care to Veterans.



Over four years ago, the **VA Healthcare System of Ohio (VISN 10)** made a unified push to commit to relationship-based care, establishing and maintaining healing relationships as the foundation of care at all facilities within the VISN.

Healing Relationships

Healing relationships are the foundation of a positive health care experience. When you are aware of the power of our interactions, a kind word, a supportive gesture, or a genuine look in someone's eyes can truly impact healing. Healing relationships include the following areas of in-facility care:

- *Community and Family:* It is our goal to establish a strong, lasting relationship with each Veteran, and also to identify other strong networks of support. This includes relationships with VA staff, family, friends, coworkers, and other Veterans.
- *Customer Service:* We must always go above and beyond to make sure the Veteran is treated with the utmost respect and that inquiries are promptly addressed.
- *Patient Education and Access to Information:* It is important for Veterans to have access to information regarding their health at all times, not just when they are speaking with staff in person.
- *Staff-Patient Communication and Interaction:* Facilities have guidelines that address the ideal practices for interacting with Veterans in a positive and encouraging way.
- *Staff Empowerment and Teamwork:* To help Veterans to the best of our abilities, we must work as a motivated, cooperative, healthy team. The Blueprint for Excellence describes the ideal whole health care team this way: "A dedicated team of professionals, tapping into the full breadth of VA benefits, who are committed to weaving support for both care needs and health into a coherent experience of Veteran centered care that maximizes well-being."

To continue to build healing relationships, VA medical centers are:

- Initiating a campaign to improve communication with family members while their loved one is in surgery. (*Colorado*)
- Creating compassion training for all staff, leading to streamlined communication among doctors, nurses, and patients. (*Texas*)
- Training nurses in communication skills necessary to establish meaningful relationships with Veterans. (*Alabama*)
- Creating a community for Women Veteran Health Services. (*Washington, D.C.*)
- Piloting the VHA Voices program, where employees learn the power of personal stories and deep listening. (*New Jersey, North Carolina, and many other locations*)
- Having Veteran actors participate in simulation labs to demonstrate patient centered approaches. (*California and New Jersey*)

Healing Relationships: Selected Resources

Secure Messaging

Great leaps in technology allow us to rethink the ways in which staff and patients communicate with each other. For example, many VA facilities offer secure messaging. This allows My Health^eVet users who have completed an identity verification process to exchange electronic messages with members of their VA health care teams for non-urgent needs, increasing access to providers and improving overall health outcomes. The OPCC&CT developed a guide to patient centered secure messaging to optimize the use of this means of communication for healing relationships. (*Resource: White Paper*)

Interactive Patient Care

This system provides patients with access to a wide variety of health education and information. It also empowers them to engage fully with their care team and be a part of conversations about improving their health and well-being. This is another example of our ability to use advancing technology to reinforce healthy relationships between patients and your team. (*Resources: Toolkit, White Paper*)



All resources listed here can be accessed on our Resource Navigator at [HealthforLife.vacloud.us/navigator](https://healthforlife.vacloud.us/navigator).



All facilities in the **VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN 8)** offer Veterans Interactive Patient Care. Watch the video, “Interactive Patient Care: Bringing Whole Health Care to Life,” at www.va.gov/patientcenteredcare/multimedia-and-resources.asp.



Veteran Story:

LANA

“I’m so excited about the second half of my life — I don’t know what to do next!”

— Lana

For more than two decades, Lana struggled to control her weight, including trying multiple specialized diets. Lana weighed almost 500 pounds when, depressed and at a loss for what to do, she contacted VA Southern Nevada Health Care System. She met the staff at the Women’s Clinic who, along with the Health Promotion Disease Prevention Program Manager, took time to get to know Lana, educating her and helping her get to the root of her health care needs. They invited her to participate in the MOVE! program and years later, Lana attends six exercise classes a week, maintains a healthy weight, and can fully enjoy time with her family.





The Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (VISN 16) recently established a primary call center that has helped reduce the abandonment rate for calls from 21.8 percent to only 6.8 percent and the time it takes to answer calls from about 227 seconds to less than 85 seconds.

“I love my patients. I treat them like my family.”

*— Antoinette Costa, M.D.,
Internal and Geriatric Medicine,
VA New Jersey Health Care System*

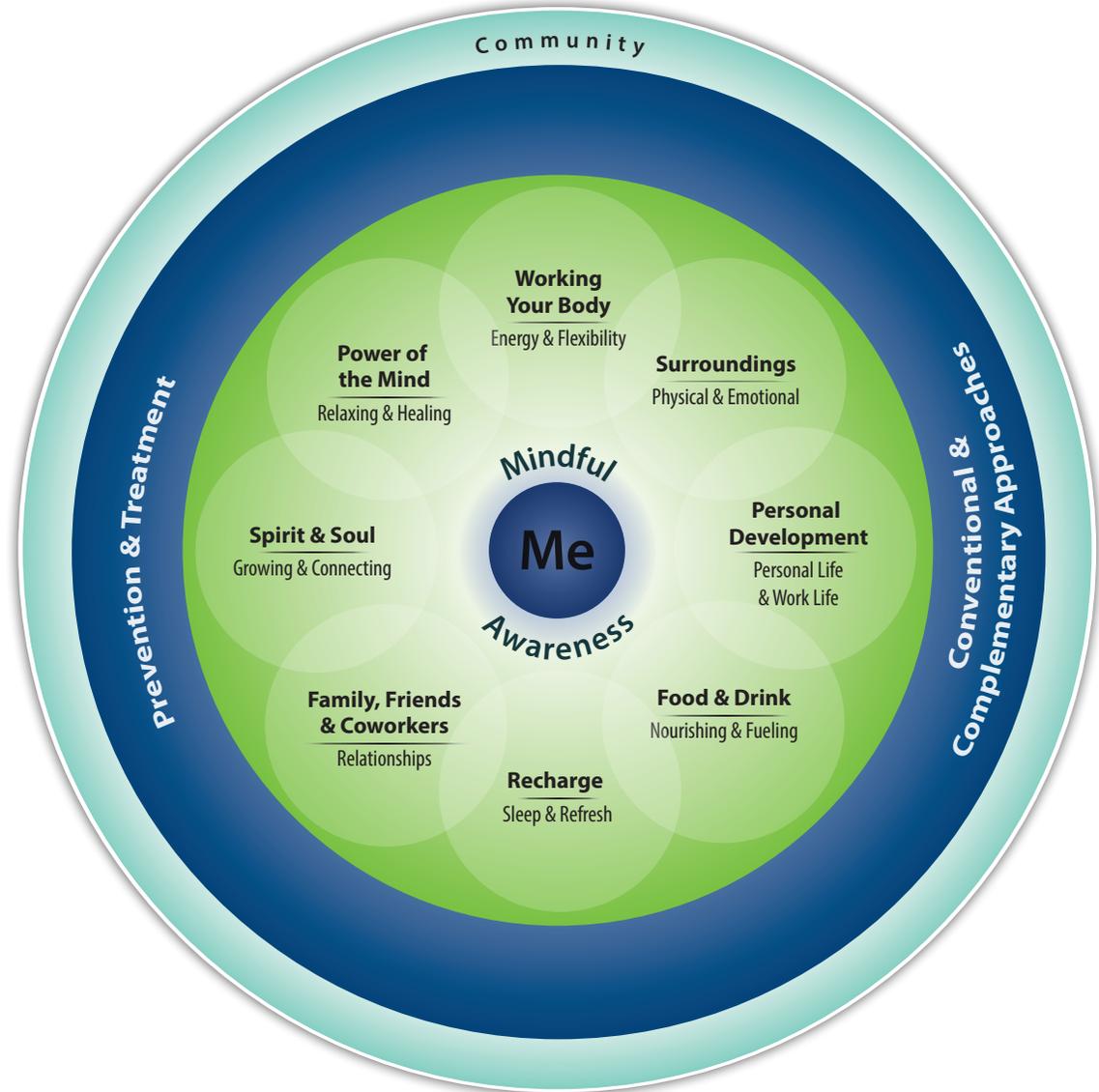


Incorporating the Practice of Whole Health

In addition to developing healing environments and strengthening relationships, whole health focuses on self-healing mechanisms that are based around a person's history, needs, and values.

Components of Proactive Health and Well-Being

The Whole Health Equation helps Veterans and providers consider how all aspects of a Veteran's life contribute to his or her health and healing. The Components of Proactive Health and Well-Being model illustrates how the areas of an individual's life are connected and how improving one area can benefit all other aspects of one's whole health. At the center of this model is the person; with a mindful approach to self-care, professional care, and community, one achieves whole health.



Me. Whole health care begins and ends with the person. In this approach, as you work with Veterans, ask them to reflect on these questions:

- What really matters to you in your life? What brings you joy and happiness?
- What do you want your health for? What inspires you to have greater health?
- What is your vision of your best possible health?

When Veterans take time to explore these questions, you will be able to connect their health care to their life and what matters most to them.

Mindfulness Awareness. As people learn the skill of mindfulness, they bring their own awareness and wisdom to their health and life. As they learn to pay attention to the present moment instead of worrying about the past or future they begin to notice things before they become big issues. For example, they may notice they are still eating even though they are full, or they may notice early signs of pain when doing a particular physical activity. Mindful awareness allows people to connect their body and mind in a proactive way.



The Washington DC VA Medical Center (VISN 5) created a virtual integrative health program that gives Veterans access to complementary health approaches from their homes. Staff research includes an examination of outcomes related to whole health approaches.



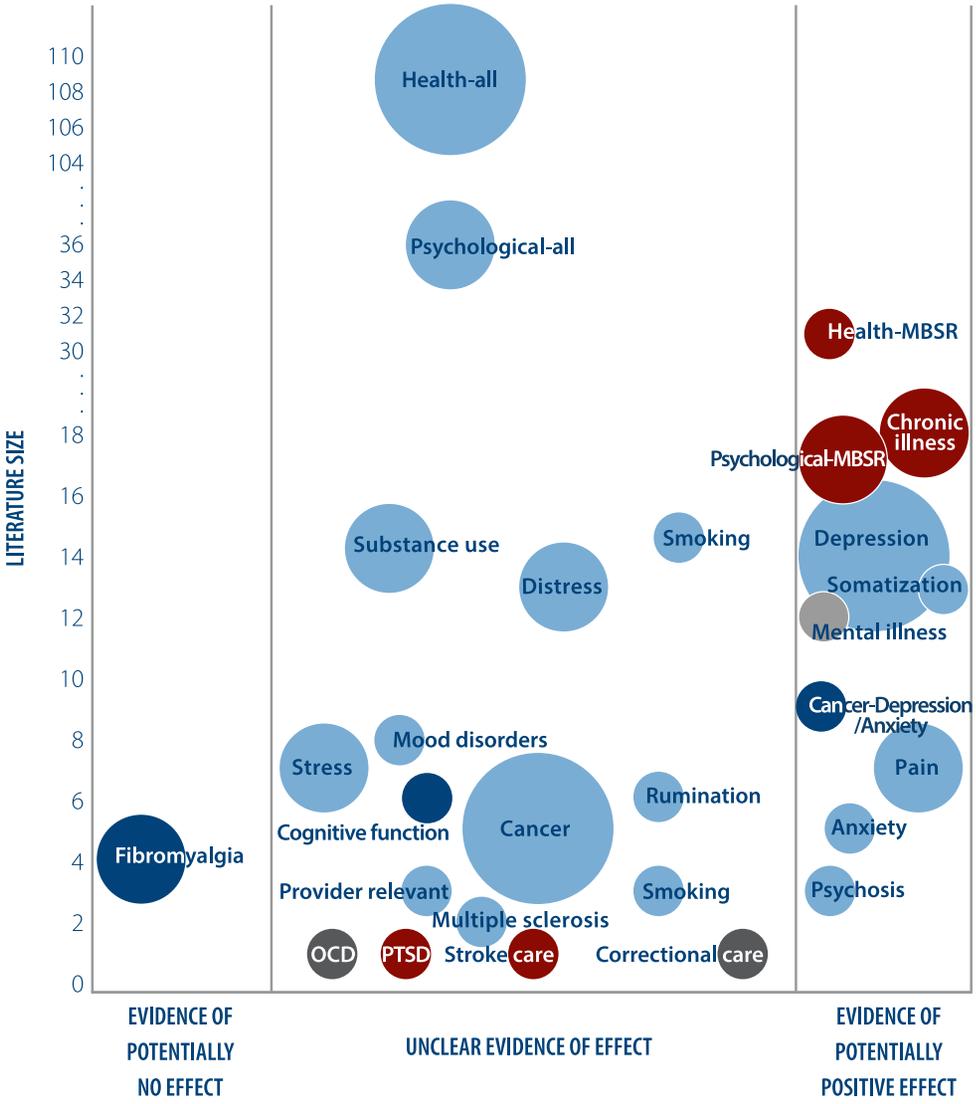


Evidence Map: Mindfulness

QUERI conducted 81 systematic reviews of studies performed through 2014 that evaluated mindfulness as a treatment for a variety of health-related conditions.

The evidence map illustrates the evidence of potential positive effect of mindfulness interventions on depression, pain, mental illness, and anxiety.

Find the complete report on mindfulness through our Resource Navigator at HealthforLife.vacloud.us.



- Various mindfulness interventions
- Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)
- MBSR + MBCT
- Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT)
- Unique mindfulness-based intervention

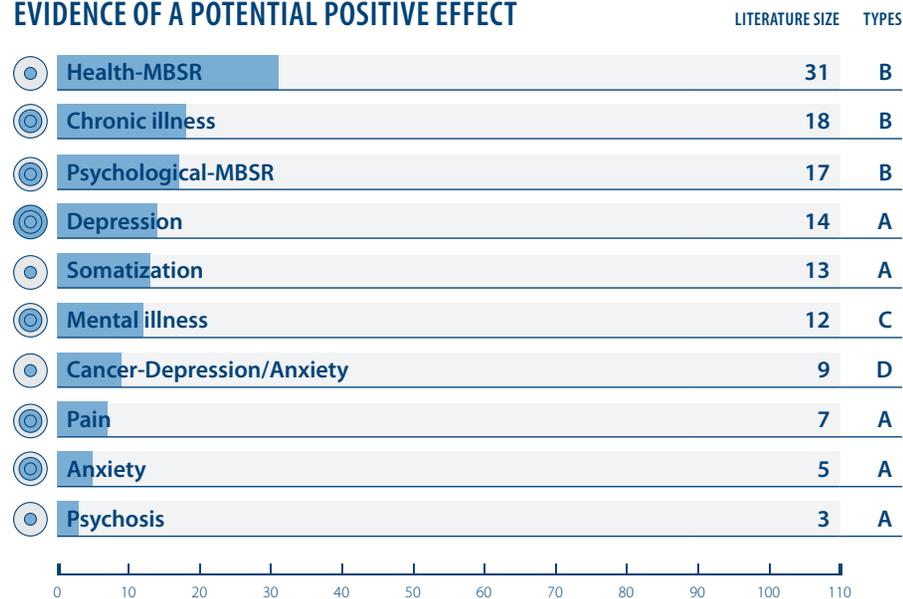


Evidence Confidence Level: LOW | MEDIUM | HIGH

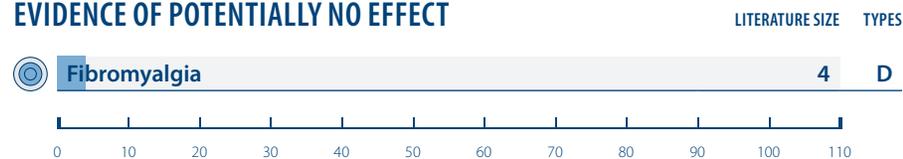
Types of mindfulness intervention:

- (A) VARIOUS MINDFULNESS INTERVENTIONS
- (B) MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION (MBSR)
- (C) MINDFULNESS BASED COGNITIVE THERAPY (MBCT)
- (D) MBSR + MBCT
- (E) UNIQUE MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTION

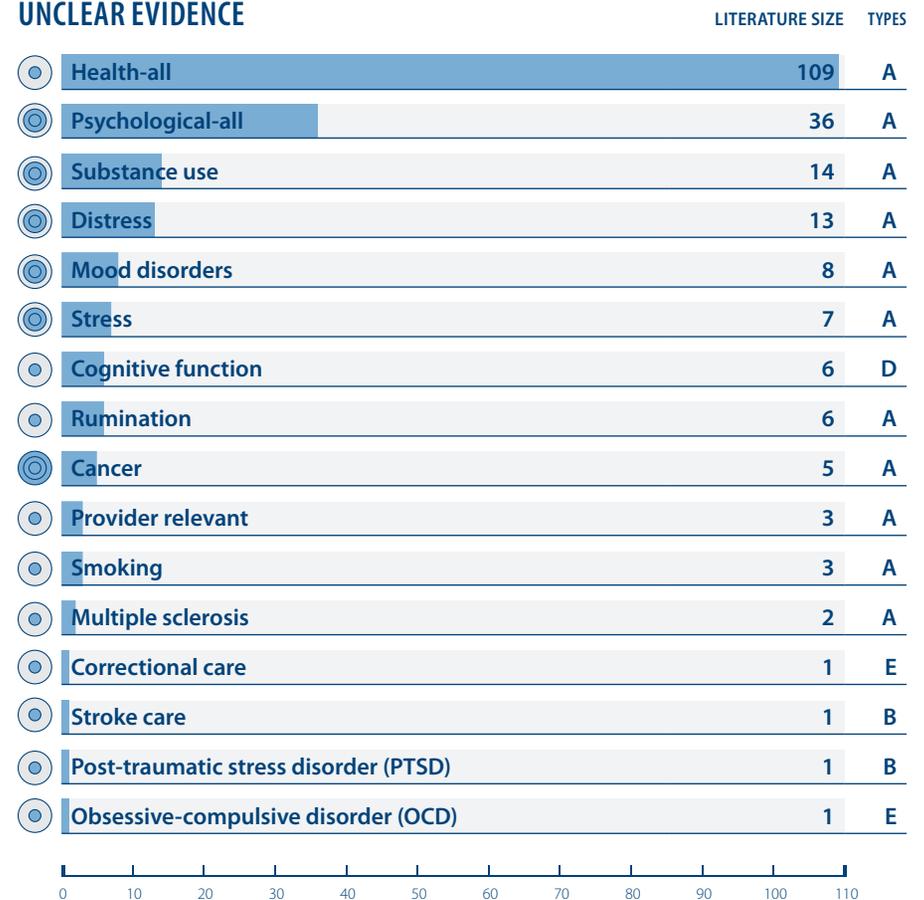
EVIDENCE OF A POTENTIAL POSITIVE EFFECT



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UNCLEAR EVIDENCE



VA Puget Sound Health Care System (VISN 20) partnered with the U.S. Olympic Committee in Fiscal Year 2014 to pilot the National Veterans Sports and Wellness Program. The goal of this program was to increase healthy lifestyle behaviors among Veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder through engagement in recreational sports activities. About 40 Veterans and 10 mental health clinicians attended the pilot event.

To see how one Veteran worked with VA staff to create a dramatic change in his surroundings, watch “Overcoming Homelessness” at www.va.gov/patientcenteredcare/multimedia-and-resources.asp



The Eight Areas of Self-Care. Regardless of the quality of care people receive, the most important determinant of their health and well-being is how they live.

The following eight areas of self-care are highly interrelated; when a person makes a change in one area, there is often an impact on other areas and on his or her overall health and well-being. Below are examples that support patients in living their best lives.

- 1. Working Your Body: Energy and Flexibility.** Exercise gives you strength and energy. Regular exercise can lower blood pressure and cholesterol and reduce the risk for heart disease. Exploring different ways to move your body and finding approaches that energize and revitalize you is an important aspect of your whole health. Veterans can find what type of exercise fits their personal needs through programs including:
 - VA National Rehabilitation Programs (e.g., *Veterans sports clinics, games*)
 - Recreational Therapy (e.g., *equestrian therapy, adaptive cycling*)
 - Exercise and Movement (e.g., *dance/Zumba, walking programs, gyms*)
 - Tai Chi, Yoga, Qi Gong
- 2. Surroundings: Physical and Emotional.** It is important for people to pay attention to the influences of environment on their life and health. They can learn how to influence their surroundings in a healthy, fulfilling manner by paying attention to the things that affect them positively and limiting the negative influences. VA programs such as the following can help:
 - Housing and Urban Development/Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (*HUD/VASH*)
 - Music and the Arts
 - VA Home Loans

3. Personal Development: Personal Life and Work Life. How people spend the hours in their day means a lot; as they explore and understand what matters most to them, they can begin to devote more time and energy to those values. The following VA practices can help Veterans get and keep their personal and work life on track:

- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Compensated Work Therapy
- Voluntary Service Programs
- Veterans Health Library
- Veteran Centers (*career counseling, interviewing skills*)
- Horticultural Training Programs (*Master Gardeners*)

4. Food and Drink: Nourishing and Fueling. The impact of food and drink on health and healing is far more powerful than most people realize. Choosing the right things to eat and drink can nourish body and mind, and support patients' health goals. VA programs that can help include:

- Nutrition Classes
- Farmers Markets and Healthy Canteen Choices (*Veterans Canteen Service*)
- Demonstration Kitchen (*Nutrition & Food Service*)
- MOVE! Weight Management Program
- Tobacco Cessation Programs



The OPCC&CT, Recreation Therapy Service, VA NY/NJ Veterans Healthcare Network (VISN 3), the Americans for the Arts, Johnson & Johnson, and the National Center for Creative Aging joined together and held a national Arts in Healing Symposium in March 2015. The purpose of this symposium was to expand and collaborate with community partners to foster Arts in Healing. Arts in Healing is not limited to visual arts like painting, drawing and photography; it also includes music, writing, and other forms of self-expression. Watch a video of the event at www.va.gov/patientcenteredcare/multimedia-and-resources.asp





The OPCC&CT collaborated with the director of the VHA Golden Age Games to support the health and well-being of older Veterans. Through training and listening sessions, Veterans learned about self-care and the role of good nutrition in achieving optimal health.



The Birmingham VA Medical Center (VISN 7), created “Connect to Recovery” to provide at-risk Veterans with cell phones so they can stay connected to family and their health care team.

5. Recharge: Sleep and Refresh. Restorative sleep can energize you for the day ahead. But sleep is not the only way to refresh. You should establish a good balance between activity and rest. Examples of approaches that can help you recharge include:

- Progressive Relaxation
- Sleep Hygiene
- Breathing Exercises
- Relaxation approaches
- Music Therapy
- Art Therapy

6. Family, Friends, and Coworkers: Relationships. An important part of health and well-being is spending time with friends and loved ones. Look for ways to build and maintain healthy relationships, whether they are with family, friends, intimate partners, co-workers, or other Veterans. VA programs that support Veterans as they seek to strengthen relationships include:

- Peer Support Program
- Marriage and Family Therapy
- Warrior to Soul Mate Program
- Caregiver Support Program
- Care4Giver (*Mobile app*)
- Veterans Career Counseling

7. Spirit and Soul: Growing and Connecting. A sense of meaning and purpose in life is essential for many people, whether it is derived from spirituality, nature, art, or simply quiet time spent alone. Researchers have found that people who have a greater sense of purpose are more likely to outlive their peers. Examples of VA practices that may help patients to grow and connect include:

- Living History Project
- Drum Circles
- Sweat Lodges
- Labyrinths
- My Life/My Story
- Chaplaincy Service

8. Power of the Mind: Relaxing and Healing. What is good for the mind is often good for the body. Mind-body practices can help you tap into the power of your mind to heal and cope, reduce stress, manage pain, and find peace. Helping Veterans relax and visualize their health goals can go a long way to pushing them in the right direction. Examples of the approaches that Veterans can explore to develop relaxing and healing mechanisms include:

- Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
- Stress Management Programs
- Biofeedback Programs
- Relaxation Breathing
- Tai Chi, Yoga, Qi Gong
- Mantram Repetition
- Breathe2Relax (*Mobile App*)

Starting in Fiscal Year 2010, **Fayetteville VA Medical Center (VISN 6)** received funding for “Be Here, Be Well.” This program focuses on enhancing the facility’s healing environment, including elements such as digital signage, a patient comfort room, and various homelike details.



In April 2014, the OPCC&CT was asked to create the VHA Integrative Health Coordinating Center (IHCC) to coordinate and support organization-wide adoption of integrative health practices. The IHCC has two main functions:

1. To identify and remove barriers to providing integrative health across the system
2. To be a resource for clinical practices and education for both Veterans and for clinicians

The priority functions of the IHCC will include:

- Developing innovative policies and programs regarding integrative approaches to personalized, proactive, patient-driven care for all VHA staff
- Facilitating and serving as subject matter experts to develop new occupation codes, credentialing and privileging, and supervision

IHCC is partnering with VA Health Science Research and Development to expand related research, beginning with the facilitators and barriers to the provision of integrative health in VA. For more information on the role of integrative health at VA, including how IHCC is deploying integrative health across the country, read an article published by the OPCC&CT at http://journals.lww.com/lww-medicalcare/Fulltext/2014/12001/Whole_Health_The_Vision_and_Implementation_of.4.aspx.

Professional Care. In a whole health model, professional care includes not only conventional approaches but also incorporates an integrative health approach. This holistic approach includes prevention and treatment of illness and disease, which can consist of tests, medications, supplements, surgeries, examinations, treatments, and counseling, as well as options such as acupuncture and mind-body therapies.

Community. Community means more than the place where one lives, works, and worships; it includes all the people and groups on whom one relies. The vast majority of a person's life is spent with his or her community, not in a health care system. Ensuring that one's community is healthy and nurturing is essential for a healthy life.

The William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital in Madison, Wisconsin (VISN 12) used grant funding from the OPCC&CT to develop the "My Life, My Story" program. The program has trained more than 26 community volunteers who interview patients and help write their stories so the team can understand what matters most to them. Since the program started in 2013, there have been 619 interviews, 353 of which have been conducted by community volunteers. The "My Life, My Story" program was expanded to six other VA hospitals around the country as of March 2015: **White River Junction VA Medical Center (VISN 1)**, **Asheville VA Medical Center (VISN 6)**, **James J. Peters VA Medical Center (VISN 3)**, **Iowa City VA Health Care System (VISN 23)**, **VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System (VISN 21)**, and **Colmery-O'Neil VA Medical Center (VISN 15)**. The William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital is supplying three other VA locations with a "My Life, My Story" toolkit and project support so that they can bring the program to their facilities.

Components of Proactive Health and Well-Being: Selected Resources

A Patient Centered Approach to:

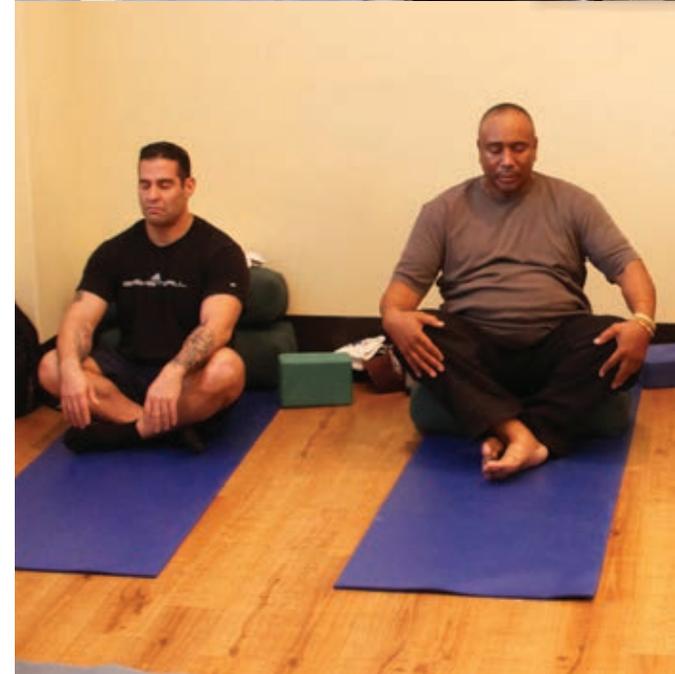
This video series focuses on the Components of Proactive Health and Well-Being, one component at a time. The series can be a useful tool either in your work with Veterans or as a demonstration of strong patient centered practices at other VA facilities. *(Resources: Video Series)*

Healthy Communities Greenhouse Project

Veteran Thurston Mangrum worked with the VA New Jersey Health Care System to create a comprehensive green job skills program focused on sustainable landscaping, master gardening, and stormwater management. The program allows Veterans to participate in work therapy opportunities on the grounds of the medical center — for which they earn a salary — and lets them gain expertise and a sense of community, helping many Veterans become certified master gardeners. *(Resources: Toolkit, Video)*

Acupuncture, Yoga, and Tai Chi

These practices are an important aspect of integrative health practices at VA facilities where they are available. Each can have a profound effect on Veterans' health and well-being, including helping to manage pain and unlock the power of the mind. Our research has shown that these services have helped many Veterans improve their health and healing. *(Resources: Evidence Maps, Toolkits, and Web Presentations)*





All resources listed here can be accessed at [Vwww.infoshare.va.gov/sites/opcc](http://www.infoshare.va.gov/sites/opcc).



The OPCC&CT collaborated with the Office of Rehabilitation and Prosthetic Services to launch a three-year pilot project in Palo Alto, California; Richmond, Virginia; and San Antonio, Texas. The project was designed to explore the feasibility of implementing health coaching in polytrauma care. This program's success, as researched by the Center of Innovation on Disability and Rehabilitation, was measured by testing whether Veterans and clinicians accepted health coaches as a viable treatment option for Veterans. Cited facilitators of success included whole health education and training and assigning health coaches to Veterans' treatment teams.



Integrative Health Coaching Initiative in Homeless Veterans

An Integrative Health Coaching (IHC) initiative in Fayetteville, North Carolina allows a VA social worker to engage with homeless Veterans in an atmosphere that allows open communication and collaboration. With the help of IHC, homeless Veterans are able to explore what matters most to them, and then engage more fully in their health. Veterans who engaged with the program were found to:

- Set goals that were important to them at a much higher rate than the control group did.
- Universally report their experience as good, very good, or excellent.
- Stay within the VA system at a much higher rate than the control group did; members of the control group visited outsider providers more frequently.

(Resource: White Paper)

Community Integration Through Creativity

This project involved Veterans with severe mental illness who participated in creative arts programs that helped them develop skills, fostered independence, and ultimately reduced stigma they had associated with mental health challenges. The Veterans are reintegrating into the local community by promoting the results of these programs and building relationships that will help them transition to lives of greater independence. *(Resource: Toolkit)*

Introduction to Mindfulness

Without a doubt, mindfulness is an integral part of connecting patients with their whole health goals. Veterans get the most out of the eight areas of self-care only when they can observe in real time the effects of their actions. VA Compassionate Action Learning Modules (VA CALM) has compiled a compendium of resources on mindfulness, and how you can reference it as you work with Veterans to lead them toward their health care. *(Resources: Evidence Map, Toolkit, and Web Presentation)*



Veteran Story:

SCOTT

“It’s been a journey to joy. I’m getting there now.”

— *Scott*

Scott served in Iraq as a member of the U.S. Marine Corps. After returning home he began struggling with sleeplessness, alcohol abuse, and social isolation. Desperate to break the cycle, he visited his local VA facility, where his care team recommended a whole health plan of action that included acupuncture and one-on-one therapy. Five years after coming back home, Scott no longer had nightmares; he quit drinking and rediscovered the joy of social engagements. Thanks to a whole health approach, he was able to forge a new beginning.



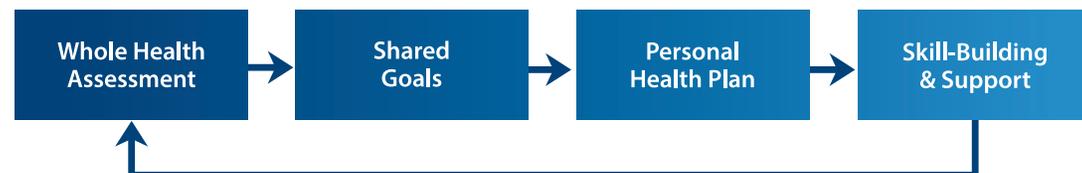
Personalized Health Approach

A personalized health plan starts not with “What’s the matter?” but with exploring and discovering what matters most to the Veteran.

Assessing the Effectiveness of the Personalized Health Approach. How effective is personalized health planning in helping VA achieve its vision of personalized, proactive, patient-driven care? VA conducted an initial study that showed promising results. The “Whole Health Personal Health Planning in Primary Care Pilot Annual Report” gives the results from an examination of five primary care sites in Massachusetts and Texas that participated in a three-month pilot in which staff members were trained in personalized health planning and Whole Health Coaching.

Results show that personal health planning:

1. Enhances patient and clinician engagement.
2. Provides structure for shared goal setting.
3. Establishes a process by which Veterans can achieve their desired health outcomes.



In concert with the local Health Promotion Disease Prevention program, champions at the Walla Walla VA Medical Center have piloted a health planning tool at a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic. As a result of the program, referrals to complementary therapies have increased significantly.

The VA Southeast Network (VISN 7) and the Desert Pacific Healthcare Network (VISN 22) are implementing VISN-wide strategies to expand personalized health planning across their networks.

In addition, clinicians reported higher levels of job satisfaction, and said that they better understood how to help patients achieve the best possible outcomes.

Researchers conducting this qualitative analysis pinpointed eight themes that should be considered in the implementation of personalized health planning:

- Patient engagement
- Clinical assessment
- Goal setting
- Clinical workflow
- Resources and support for Veterans and clinicians
- Computerized Patient Record System integration
- Patient-clinician relationship
- Clinical outcomes

My Story/Personal Health Inventory. The My Story/Personal Health Inventory (PHI) is a self-reflection tool designed for Veterans to use as the first step in the personal health planning process. It walks through the Components of Proactive Health and Well-Being, and lays the foundation for a personalized, proactive, patient-driven plan of action. Since it was published in 2011, the My Story/PHI has helped Veterans understand their health through a lens that is uniquely theirs. The My Story/PHI is also an important tool for clinicians because it provides insight into Veterans' perspective on their health.

A study was conducted last year by the VA North Texas Health Care System that evaluated the PHI's effect on a small group of Veterans with serious mental illnesses. In their responses, Veterans said that using the PHI made them feel that clinicians were listening to them, and it allowed many of them to see the link between physical and mental health. The PHI process also had a significant effect on the

"We're making a very positive impact on patient care in ways that we would have not been able to do if we were not approaching it in this way," said a pharmacist. "(Personalized health planning) helps you feel more satisfied with what you do because that's why we're here, serving in that way."



"Setting a goal with a patient is pretty easy because people have an idea of what they should be doing and what they want to be doing," said a clinician. "They know their goal. So it's a matter of just listening ... to get the medical goal and the patient goal to match."





Veterans' interaction with VA resources: Of the 21 Veterans in the study, the average number of bed days of care was reduced from 18 to fewer than two, and the total number of emergency room visits in that group decreased from 13 to two. These early results indicate that patient centered practices can be the underpinnings of a more efficient system of care.

One of VA's goals for 2015 is to further research how to successfully implement a personalized health approach at VA facilities. As with research on other organizational changes, we will pay close attention to insight from VA staff as well as the voice of the Veteran.

Personalized Health Approach: Selected Resources

The Personalized Health Inventory: An Analysis of Veteran Responses

VA conducted a study quantitatively analyzing the impact that PHIs have on Veterans' care. One conclusion: VA staff must use internal communication to agree among themselves on how to present PHIs to Veterans. Though early results are promising, future success at an institutional level requires interdepartmental buy-in. (Resource: *White paper*)

Dallas Center of Innovation Findings Related to Personal Health Planning

An evaluation team conducted a mail survey at Dallas VA analyzing the relative effectiveness of the personal health plan (PHP) in shaping Veterans' personalized, proactive, patient-driven care. The study suggests that the combination of identifying a health goal and taking follow-up action to achieve that goal may have a positive effect on health outcomes. (Resource: *White paper*)

Responses are overwhelmingly positive among clinicians at facilities that are piloting the PHI. Clinicians across the country have reported that the PHI has helped patients lose weight, manage high blood pressure, improve their sleep, and more.

All resources mentioned here — and many more — can be found on the Resource Navigator at HealthforLife.vacloud.us/navigator. Be on the lookout for future information on the Stages of Transformation and a road map to help support your medical center's journey.



In an analysis of 100 Veterans' PHIs, the top five most frequently coded categories were:

1. Being with family
2. Sleep
3. Eating proper foods
4. Being healthy
5. Social engagement

The least frequently coded categories were:

96. Relationship with provider
97. Death
98. Adherence
99. Consuming the proper liquids
100. Reference to a specific medical complaint

“Every individual in this country who’s put on the uniform and bore the stress of being a military person, serving their country, they deserve everything that we can give them to bring them back to their wholeness and their well-being again.”

— Clyde Angel, National Chaplain Center Liaison, Warrior to Soul Mate Program



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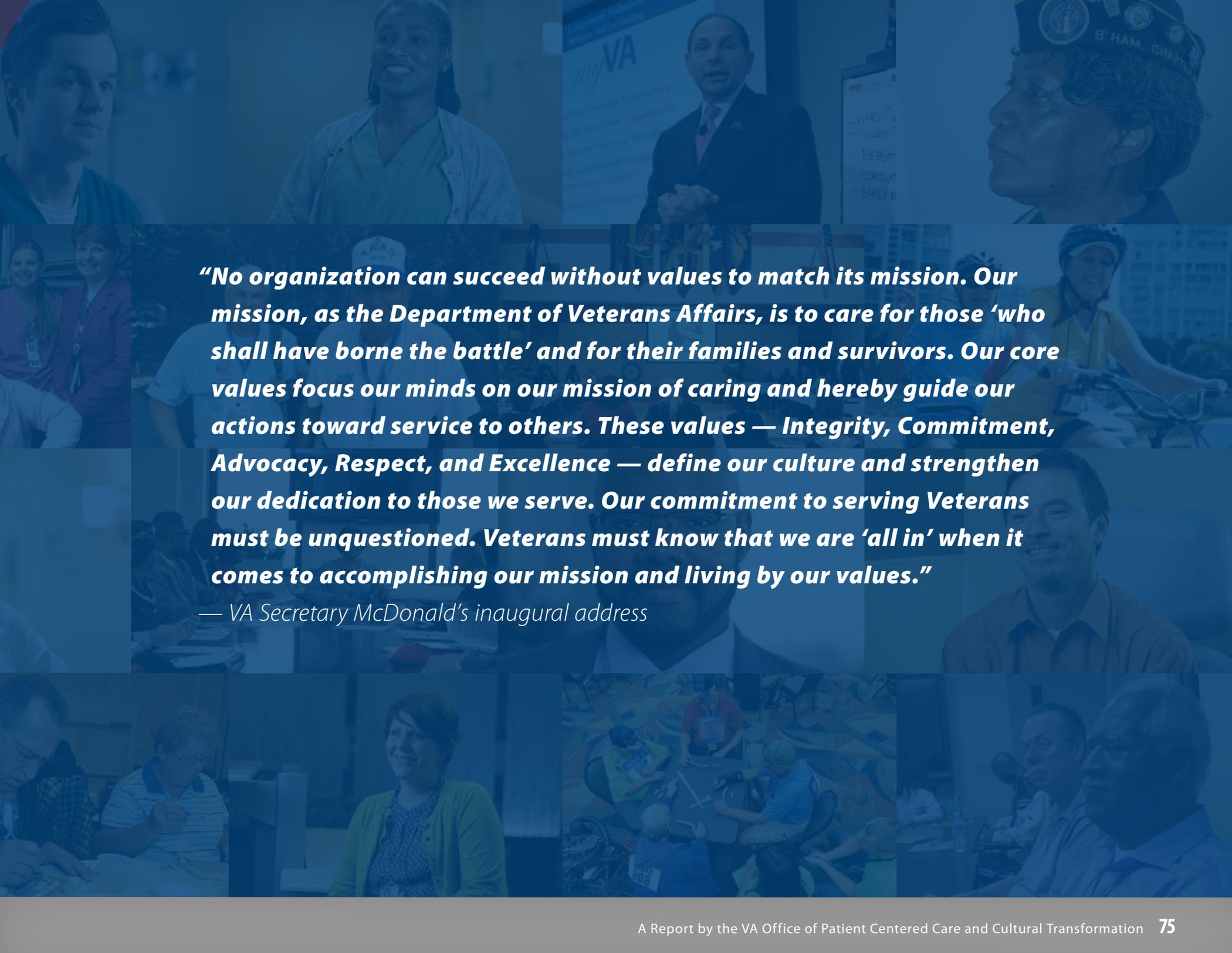
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“No organization can succeed without values to match its mission. Our mission, as the Department of Veterans Affairs, is to care for those ‘who shall have borne the battle’ and for their families and survivors. Our core values focus our minds on our mission of caring and hereby guide our actions toward service to others. These values — Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence — define our culture and strengthen our dedication to those we serve. Our commitment to serving Veterans must be unquestioned. Veterans must know that we are ‘all in’ when it comes to accomplishing our mission and living by our values.”

— VA Secretary McDonald’s inaugural address

Health for Life

Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation-10 NE

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