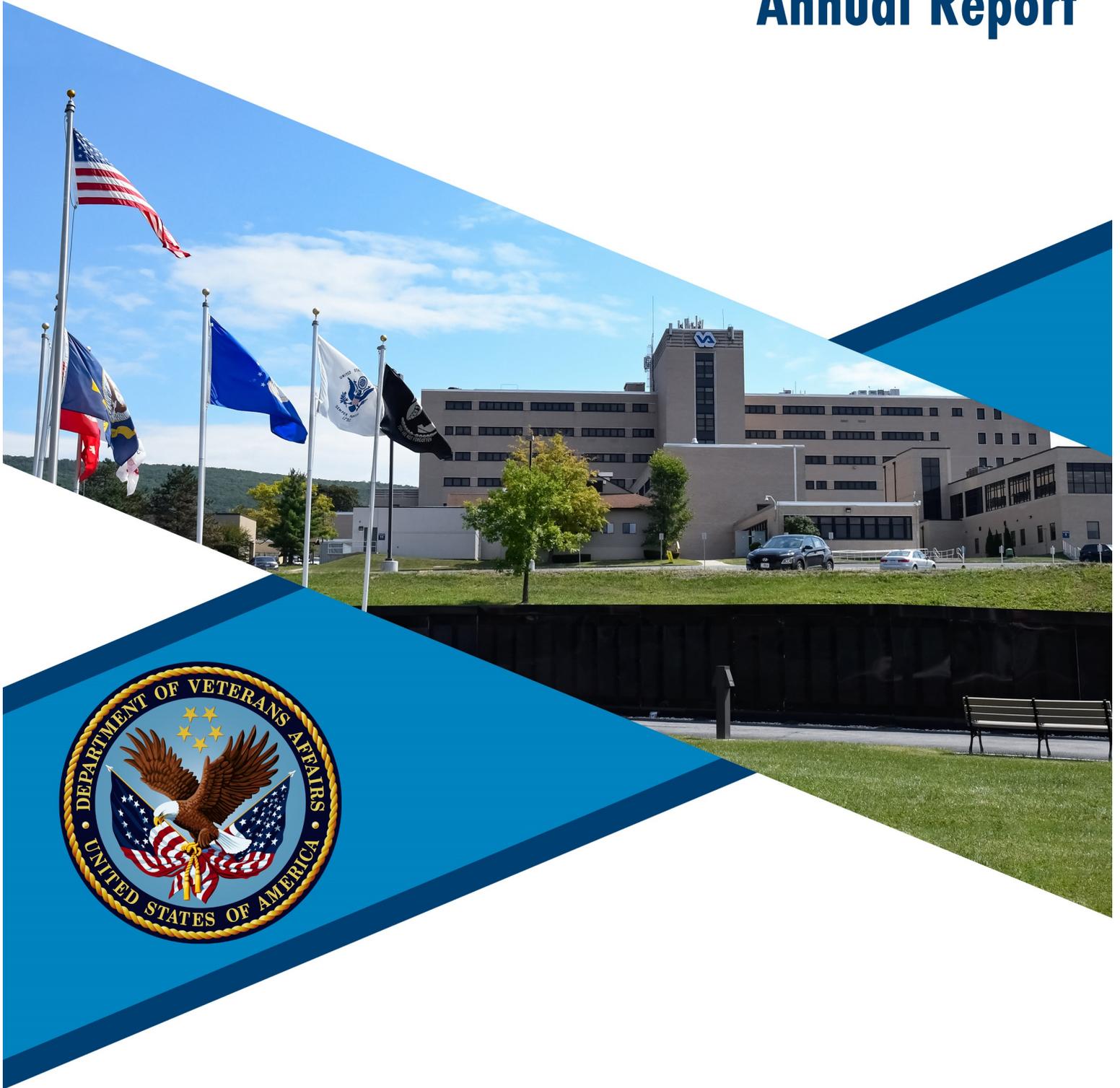


James E. Van Zandt VAMC

2020

Annual Report



James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center

2020 VISN 4 ANNUAL REPORT TO STAKEHOLDERS

Dear Stakeholders,

This has been a trying year, however, our Altoona VAMC facility, along with our five community-based outpatient clinics (CBOC) in DuBois, Huntingdon, Indiana, Johnstown and State College are persevering. When I arrived, more than three years ago, I knew that our Veterans and staff were exceptional people, but what had become increasing apparent over the past year is the depth of their commitment. I have said it before but the trials of the past year just reinforces my opinion, the VA is a very special place because heroes walk our halls.

COVID-19 has affected us all, but your VA continues moving forward. Over the past year, we have continued to expand our services and construction projects have been evidence of our growth. Our services have adapted to the challenges presented to us, allowing us to serve our Veterans in a safe and timely manner. Our telehealth services have stepped up and given our Veterans the option of being seen virtually by their physicians, while our in-person staff have implemented sanitization measures to protect our Veterans.

Additionally, one of our departments deserves a special thank you. Often overlooked, our housekeeper staff work daily to care for our facility. They have become the unsung heroes in the battle against COVID-19. Their diligence and dedication have been the cornerstone to the safety of our Veterans and staff.

Over the past year, we have implemented many changes to combat COVID-19. We increased the use of telehealth services, constructed screening and testing stations upon entry to the facility and operated a community drive-thru flu vaccine clinic. Additionally, with the assistance of technology, our Community Living Center was able to communicate with loved ones through Facebook Portal. To top it off, one of our Red Coat Ambassadors received the VA Red Coat Ambassador of the Year Award. He provided an innovative approach in making sure our Veterans were still able to communicate with family and friends in the community.

There is hope on the horizon, with the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine, and light at the end of the tunnel. As we move forward into 2021, we will continue to make the health and safety of our Veterans top priority.

It is my honor to be your VAMC Director. With more than 30 years of clinical experience as a nurse, I have never seen the dedication, kindness, and perseverance as I have seen here. There has never been a place as special, or as Veteran-centric as this facility. I renew my promise that we will continue keeping our focus on what matters most to you, our Veterans. We continue as community leaders in providing unparalleled services and health care to our Veterans. Our exceptional services are why Veterans Choose VA!



Sigrid Andrew

Director, James E. Van Zandt VAMC

JAMES E. VAN ZANDT VA MEDICAL CENTER — ALTOONA

TOTAL EMPLOYEES

973

Employees who are Veterans 234

Nurses 237

Physicians 29

UNIQUE PATIENT TOTAL

24,970

Male 22,860 / Female 2,109

OPERATING BEDS

51

SURGICAL PROCEDURES

1,083

ADMISSIONS (Including Observation)

151

OUTPATIENT VISITS

181,342

TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET

\$218,983,000

VIRTUAL CARE

Encounters completed via Telehealth

20,214

(Home Telehealth, Store and Forward and clinical video Telehealth)

CVT 17,047

Store and Forward

2,492

Home Telehealth

675

Telemental Health Care Encounters

6,359

Unique Veterans Used Secure Messaging

3,086

VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Volunteers

211

Volunteers Hours

30,098.25

Youth Volunteers

3



Altoona staff volunteers screen Veterans and employees before entering the Medical Center. Photo by: Christopher Lemke

Staff Members Holding the Line

By: Christopher Lemke

During the statewide “stay at Home” order, our staff continue to implement changes to “flatten the curve” and protect our Veterans. The most noticeable of these changes is the entry screening lines.

“I am so proud of everyone who works here,” said Sigrid Andrew, Medical Center Director. “Our employees consistently answer the call, and overcome all challenges, in an effort to provide the best health care to our Veterans,” said Andrew.

Our physicians, nurses, clinicians and administrative staff volunteer manning all hospital entry points to screen our Veterans and employees coming into the facilities. As an added precaution, there is a secondary screening center set up for anyone who shows any symptom of COVID-19. This secondary screening is geared toward making sure our Veterans and staff receive the fastest and best care possible while keeping everyone healthy. Additionally, volunteers have been making cloth masks to give to our Veterans to help protect them. Our screening teams are issuing these masks out to each veteran who needs one.

“Our Veterans should know that we will always be here to serve them regardless of the situation,” said Andrew.

Five-Star Rating for James E. Van Zandt VAMC

By: Christopher Lemke

This year the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released the results of a survey given to recently discharged patients. The James E. Van Zandt VAMC is one of only eleven hospitals, and the only U.S Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare facility in the state of Pennsylvania to receive a five-star experience rating.

“We are so honored that our Veterans think so highly of us,” said Sigrid Andrew, Medical Center Director. “Earning this rating shows that that we are succeeding in our mission, to give our Veterans the best care possible. I am extremely proud of our staff at our facility, and the hard work they do every day.”, said Andrew.

The survey showed Veterans were happy with the way our nurses and doctors communicated treatment plans, and the overall responsiveness of the staff. The survey also highlighted high satisfaction rates with instructions regarding use of medications, and the cleanliness and quietness of the hospital.

The Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey shows that the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center continues to stand out in the community. Over the past three years, the facility has expanded services to include the largest tele-health infusion clinic in U.S, and one the most advanced MRI imaging within 14-counties. Additionally, the facility leads the region in the number of Home Telehealth appointments, offering Veterans the opportunity to meet with their doctors online from their homes. These advancements allowed the facility to supply Veterans with continuous care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We continue to strive to uphold President Lincoln’s promise: “To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan” by serving and honoring the men and women who are America’s Veterans.

Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Uniquely Suited to Meet the COVID-19 Crisis

By: Christopher Lemke

The services provided by the James E. Van Zandt VAMC's Office of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine is integral to the hospital's ability to serve our Veterans. With the onset of COVID-19 a little-known, but very exceptional department has become the front line in the ongoing battle with a dangerous virus.

"We do more than anyone realizes," said Jennifer Harkins, Supervisory Medical Technologist for the Laboratory. "All of the results that the providers get come through us first. The treatment plans that the providers use, are based on the results that the lab gives them.", says Harkins.

Behind the scenes, the lab regularly deals with infectious materials, such as HIV, Hepatitis C, and now COVID-19. While everyone is adjusting to the new safety requirements, the laboratory's daily precautions made them uniquely suited to meet the new challenge.

"Every day we're wiping down our analyzers, countertops and things we touch often," says Harkins. "We're already taking the precautions behind the scenes that people are starting to take on the frontlines."

In dealing with COVID-19 the lab at the medical center has become one of the foremost testing centers for Veterans in our area. Not only has the testing helped to track the spread of COVID-19, but our in-house testing has been used to reopen access to dental procedures. For example, a Veteran in need of emergency dental care can be tested for the virus and within an hour our providers will know how to properly treat that Veteran, while protecting our staff.

With the national protocol for combating COVID-19 in place, our laboratory is

working in conjunction with the national Veterans Health Administration in implementing a new antibody test, adding another weapon to our arsenal.

With a staff of 27 health technicians, medical technicians, and phlebotomists this team is a big part of our Veteran care process.

"We Lab Rats back behind the scenes doing all the analyzing and research and testing to get to where we are for the COVID testing or whichever test might be necessary at the time you know we're all a part of the same ladder and without any of us, you're going to miss a step and fall.", said Harkins.

The staff of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine is a tireless troop of professionals whose dedication, skills, and knowledge serve our Veterans every day. If you have any questions or concerns about your healthcare and how the lab interacts with your care team, please contact your primary care provider.



The analyzer is one of the many specialized analytic devices the Altoona laboratory staff use on a daily basis.

Photo by: Christopher Lemke

Our Services

By: Christopher Lemke

With the continued challenges presented by COVID-19 our effort to meet our Veteran's needs has never faltered. With the implementation of our screening and testing protocols and our state-of-the-art Telehealth capabilities our Veterans can be confident that their services and care will not suffer in any way.

As we continue the expansion of services to our Community Based Outpatient Centers (CBOCs) our Altoona facility continues the construction on the Primary Care Hub combining all the Primary Care Teams into one location for the convenience of the Veteran.

We will continue our dedication to fulfill President Lincoln's promise "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan", by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans.

Services Offered:

- Audiology
- Cardiology
- Caregiver Support
- Dental/Oral Surgery
- Dermatology
- Geriatrics and Extended Care
- Gynecology
- Home Based Primary Care
- Homeless Veteran Care
- Intimate Partner Violence
- Laboratory and Pathology
- LGBT Veteran Care
- Low Vision and Blind Rehabilitation
- Mental Health Care
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Minority Veteran Care
- My HealthVet Coordinator
- Neurology
- Nutrition, Food, and Dietary
- Occupational Therapy
- Ophthalmology - Cataract Surgery
- Optometry
- Orthopedics
- Otolaryngology



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Services at the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center - Cont.

- Palliative and Hospice Care
- Pharmacy
- PMR Wheelchair Clinic
- PMR Amputee Clinic
- PMR PT Compression Stockings
- PMR Physical Therapy Triage Clinic
- Podiatry
- Primary Care
- Prosthetics
- Pulmonary Medicine
- Radiology
- Returning Service Member Care
- Smoking and Tobacco Cessation
- Social Work
- Specialty Care
- Speech Therapy
- Suicide Prevention
- Surgery
- Telehealth
- Travel Reimbursement
- Transition Care and Management
- Urology
- Women Veteran Care
- Wound Care

Services at the DuBois CBOC

- Audiology and Speech CVT
- Caregiver Support
- Home Based Primary Care
- Homeless Veteran Care
- Laboratory and Pathology
- Low Vision and Blind Rehabilitation
- Mental Health Care
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Occupational Therapy
- Optometry
- Physical Therapy
- Podiatry
- Primary Care
- Radiology

COMMUNITY BASED OUTPATIENT CARE CENTER SERVICES

Services at the DuBois CBOC - Cont.

- Smoking and Tobacco Cessation
 - Social Work
 - Suicide Prevention
 - Telehealth
 - Transition Care and Management
 - Wound Care
 - Travel Reimbursement
-

Services at the Huntingdon CBOC

- Caregiver Support
 - Homeless Veteran Care
 - Laboratory and Pathology
 - Low Vision and Blind Rehabilitation
 - Mental Health Care
 - Military Sexual Trauma
 - Neurology Consultation
 - Optometry
 - Physical Therapy
 - Podiatry
 - Primary Care
 - Radiology
 - Smoking and Tobacco Cessation
 - Social Work
 - Speech CVT
 - Suicide Prevention
 - Telehealth
 - Wound Care
 - Travel Reimbursement
 - Transition Care and Management
-

Services at the Indiana CBOC

- Audiology and Speech CVT
- Caregiver Support
- Homeless Veteran Care
- Laboratory and Pathology
- Low Vision and Blind Rehabilitation
- Mental Health Care
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Optometry
- Physical Therapy CVT
- Podiatry
- Primary Care
- Radiology
- Smoking and Tobacco Cessation
- Social Work
- Suicide Prevention
- Telehealth

Services at the Indiana CBOC

- Transition Care and Management
 - Travel Reimbursement
-

Services at the Johnstown CBOC

- Audiology and Speech CVT
 - Caregiver Support
 - Home Base Primary Care
 - Homeless Veteran Care
 - Laboratory and Pathology
 - Low Vision and Blind Rehabilitation
 - Mental Health Care
 - Military Sexual Trauma
 - Optometry
 - Pain Clinic
 - Physical Therapy CVT
 - Podiatry
 - Primary Care
 - Radiology
 - Smoking and Tobacco Cessation
 - Social Work
 - Suicide Prevention
 - Telehealth
 - Transition Care and Management
 - Wound Care
 - Travel Reimbursement
-

Services at the State College CBOC

- Audiology and Speech CVT
- Caregiver Support
- Home Based Primary Care
- Homeless Veteran Care
- Laboratory and Pathology
- Low Vision and Blind Rehabilitation
- Mental Health Care
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Occupational Therapy
- Optometry
- Physical Therapy CVT
- Podiatry
- Primary Care
- Radiology
- Smoking and Tobacco Cessation
- Social Work
- Suicide Prevention
- Telehealth
- Transition Care and Management
- Wound Care
- Travel Reimbursement

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