Dr. Chris Faulk (All of Us Site Investigator) is thrilled to announce the launch of the All of Us Research Program at the Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center.

The All of Us Research Program is a national effort funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that will last for ten or more years. The program is looking to enroll one million or more people across the country with the goal of helping researchers understand more about why people get sick or stay healthy. Participants will share information through surveys, health records, biospecimens, and more.

Studying DNA is a key part of this effort. One side benefit of participation is that you can get your DNA results over time.

You might learn about: your genetic ancestry, your genetic traits (such as why you might love or hate cilantro), whether you may have an increased risk of developing a serious health condition such as cancer or heart disease, or how your body might react to certain medicines.

It is our mission to ensure that Veterans are represented in this historic effort and we are excited to be enrolling at the Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center. Participation in the program may drive advances for Veterans and everyone else for decades to come!

Visit Veterans.JoinAllofUs.org to learn more. You can also call Elizabeth Petrakis (All of Us Research Coordinator) at (316) 685-2221 x52141 or email allofus@va.gov.
Improving patient experience with simple strategies

Candace Ifabiyi
MHA, MSBA, PMP

Technology’s role in health care has increased exponentially since the Veterans Administration was established in 1930.

Our ability to gather, share, and analyze health information is directly tied to improved technology. Our cover story introduces the All of Us research program, which seeks to collect and study data from 1 million people to discover new ways of treating and preventing illness. We want to make sure Veterans are represented in that study and their unique needs are addressed.

The use of technology increases provider capabilities and patient access while improving the quality of life for some patients and saving the lives of others. You can see this concept in action with our new lung cancer screening program detailed on page three. With new protocols and equipment, we can catch lung cancers earlier while the odds of recovery are at their peak.

We have moved into an era where physicians can see patients remotely and accurately diagnose a patient’s problems, even in the most rural areas, through telemedicine. The story on page four shares our expansion of specialty care services to our Community-Based Outpatient Clinics by using VA Video Connect and other telehealth modes.

It is important in this age of high-tech devices and cutting-edge treatments to remember our primary mission is providing world-class health care to our Veterans that improves their quality of life.

We treat our heroes with great warmth and respect. We make sure their voices are heard, their questions and concerns are addressed, and their feedback influences our future plans.

Our Veterans are more than names on a computer screen, and we make sure they are welcomed upon arrival at the Dole VA and treated with care, dignity, and appreciation their entire visit.

We put great care in our health care because our heroes deserve nothing less.
Registered Nurse Carol Manes is downright evangelical about the Dole VA’s lung cancer screening program.

“Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths across the nation,” she said. “It causes more deaths than prostate, breast, and colon cancer combined. The key to beating lung cancer is early detection.”

What makes lung cancer so deadly is the difficulty in discovering it early enough to employ the best treatments. Many Veterans don’t see a doctor until they experience shortness of breath or weight loss, symptoms that appear at Stage Three or Four, when treatment options are limited.

Research had shown that screening with chest x-rays is not effective at catching lung cancers in the early stages, so the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) began screening patients in high-risk groups (ages 55-80, long-time smokers, etc.) with low-dose computerized tomography (CT) before symptoms appeared.

“They found if they get the high-risk people in every year for a low-dose CT scan, they were better able to find lung cancer in the earliest stages and monitor nodules over time to make sure they did not grow,” Manes said.

The findings inspired the Dole VA to partner with a pilot project at the Minneapolis VA, which had created a tracking system to follow high-risk patients from year to year, and bring the early screening program to Wichita.

“We started our first screenings in June 2019, and we have an absolutely marvelous team,” said Manes, who now is the lung cancer screening coordinator.

The results of the program so far have been outstanding, Manes said. When Veterans at high-risk for lung cancer are identified, the Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS) tracks them throughout the year and sends reminders to check in with these patients.

“We had one gentleman who was relatively young, maybe 57, and we had him come in for a CT scan,” Manes said. “We found something suspicious, so we called him back in for a biopsy. He was so worried, you know, because no one wants to hear that, but I told him it was great news!”

Manes said before this screening process, that gentlemen may not have contacted a doctor until he had worrying symptoms, and by that time, it may have been deadly.

“But we found it at Stage One!” she said. “Meaning we can remove it and screen for the next five years to make sure it doesn’t come back! I’m so excited and filled with hope!”

More than 1,900 Veterans have enrolled in the program.

Of 42 lung cancers diagnosed, 24 have been Stage One.

Designated a Screening Center of Excellence through the Go2 Foundation for Lung Cancer Screening, one of only three VAMCs receiving this honor.

For more information about the program at the Dole VA, contact Carol Manes at (316) 685-2221, Ext. 52962.
To make access to health care easier, the Dole VA uses Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) across Kansas. These clinics provide the most common outpatient services without long drives to Wichita.

While Primary Care has been the focus of CBOCs, the Dole VA has added a host of specialty care services using telehealth technology.

Dr. Zubair Hassan is Chief of Medicine and Chief of the Pulmonary/Critical Care/Sleep Medicine Department, and he said many procedures once requiring in visits now can be handled virtually.

“Through the VA Video Connect app and other telemedicine devices, Veterans can meet with a specialty care provider through live video on any computer, tablet, or mobile device with an Internet connection,” Dr. Hassan said.

A good example of this convenience is sleep apnea testing. Sleep studies once requiring an overnight stay in a VA facility now can be conducted in the Veteran’s home with equipment provided to them.

“Once the Veteran sends the testing device back to the VA, experts interpret the results and make recommendations for further health care,” Dr. Hassan said.

Dermatological conditions can be examined in the CBOCs and sent digitally to specialty care providers on the main Dole VA campus for examination. Vital signs such as blood pressure, body temperature, pulse, and weight also can be measured with Internet-connected peripherals the Veteran uses at home.

“Our goal is to shorten wait times for services and reduce the need for trips back and forth between CBOCs and the main campus,” Dr. Hassan said. “We want to empower rural Veterans to keep their high-quality health care within the VA system.”

**DODGE CITY CBOC**
2201 Summerlon Circle
Dodge City, KS 67801-2985
888-878-6881, Ext. 57450

**HAYS CBOC**
207B East 7th Street
Hays, KS 67601-4152
888-878-6881, Ext. 41000

**HUTCHINSON CBOC**
1625 East 30th Street
Hutchinson, KS 67502-1226
888-878-6881, Ext. 41100

**PARSONS CBOC**
1907 Harding Drive
Parsons, KS 67357-8111
888-878-6881, Ext. 41060

**SALINA CBOC**
1410 East Iron Ave., Suite 1
Salina, KS 67401-3285
888-878-6881, Ext. 41020
Derby Veteran Matthew Loveless loves to cook. When he was a culinary specialist in the Navy, he took great pride in the dishes he prepared for his shipmates.

“They would come back every day and say, ‘Hey, Loveless! Man, you make the best eggs!’” Matt said. “And later that night at the bar, they would tell people, ‘See that guy over there? That’s Loveless, and he makes the best eggs ever!’”

He needs help cooking these days because piloting an electric wheelchair can be challenging in the kitchen, and that’s where his sister Alisha comes in. She has been Matt’s caregiver for the past five years.

As a civilian in 2011, Matt was shot five times by someone he knew. One of the bullets entered his head and paralyzed him.

“He had to relearn everything,” Alisha said. “He couldn’t even talk. He could look at something like an orange and know it was an orange, but he just couldn’t get the word out. He’s come a long way since then.”

And so has Alisha.

While the VA helped her brother build his current home with a wide wheelchair ramp, spacious hallways, and an automated lift system leading to the basement, the Caregiver Support Program (CSP) was guiding Alisha through the process as well.

“If we didn’t have the services the Dole VA gives us, this whole situation would be so overwhelming,” she said. “It would be my whole life.”

Whenever Alisha has a question or concern about the care she provides her brother, she has someone at the Dole VA to call for support. She also has people checking on how she is doing and providing services that allow her some breathing room.

“The CSP allows me to be a better caregiver by helping me take care of myself in the process,” she said.
When construction of the Wichita Veterans Administration Hospital was completed in March 1933, the state-of-the-art facility drew raves from *The Wichita Eagle*. The paper called it “the finest hospital unit, bar none, in the United States today” and praised its construction as “the best thought and experience that architects, builders, and hospital experts could devise.”

In addition to a bevy of advanced medical equipment, including “one of the most modern and efficient telephone systems in the United States,” the facility also featured “an animal house where guinea pigs, sheep, and other small animals needed for blood tests will be kept.”

We’ve come a long way since our debut nearly nine decades ago, and the Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center always has wielded the latest medical technology while providing world-class care to the Veterans it serves.

Most recently, we have received our first surgical robot, the DaVinci 2. The multi-limbed machine gives surgeons 3D high-definition magnification while using tiny instruments with built-in tremor filtration to perform smooth and precise operations.

We’ve also updated our Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) device to the Siemens Magnetom Sola 1.5T (*shown to the left*), an advanced system producing high-quality images of muscles, joints, the nervous system, and tissues.

The Dole VA employs the latest evidence-based treatments and procedures for the health care of our Veterans. Our heroes deserve nothing less than excellence, and we are proud to keep learning and growing while pursuing that high level of excellence.

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The mid-’50s Picker mobile X-ray device showcased in the Bldg. 4 Auditorium (*above*) paved the way for our upgraded Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machine (*below*).
The holiday season can prove tough for all of us, especially with the ongoing pandemic affecting every aspect of our daily lives.

Thankfully, even the coronavirus cannot stop the return of Operation Joy, which helps Veteran families in need of a brighter celebration.

The annual effort is a collaboration between the Homeless Program, Voluntary Services, and Veterans Service Organizations.

Homeless Program Coordinators identify families with children in the Homeless Program needing a little help with their festivities. Once families are identified through the Homeless Program, their names and ages are sent to Voluntary Services to find donors who can donate gifts, Christmas trees, decorations, clothing, and meals.

With the help of organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), the American Legion, and the American Red Cross, Operation Joy fulfilled the wishes of 16 Veteran families in the Homeless Program last year.

Enthusiastic support also has been received by Veterans motorcycle clubs, several hospices across Kansas, and even Dole VA staff members.

Russell Childs is the Deputy Commander of the Combat Veteran Motorcycle Association, and he said his organization is proud to contribute to the Veteran community.

“We don’t leave people behind,” Childs said. “We want to be there for those in need of a helping hand, because we take care of our own.”

This year, Operation Joy is looking to help even more families with the assistance of individuals, businesses, and community organizations.

Once families are chosen through the Homeless Program and adopted, a wish list will be presented to each donor to begin shopping.

The Dole VA sincerely thanks everyone supporting Operation Joy 2021 with their time and donations!

If you are a Veteran experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness, please call the 24/7 Homeless Hotline at (877) 424-3838.
At the Dole VA, Volunteers play a crucial role in delivering the very best customer service to our Veterans. The high level of excellence for which we always strive simply would be out of reach without them.

The goal of Voluntary Services is refocusing its energies toward better serving the Veteran community.

The job of a Volunteer is to serve those who served their country, and they do that in a variety of ways.

 Escorts assist patients with mobility issues to their destinations, run labs between in-house services, and track calls and number of patients moved.

 Drivers transport Veterans to and from medical appointments, often requiring round trips to Kansas City, Topeka, and other outlying areas.

 Administrative Volunteers help with office work, send reminders to patients, and direct incoming phone calls.

 Red Coats are our premier Volunteers comprising a team of seasoned Volunteers who do whatever it takes to serve our Veterans. They are truly the face of the Dole VA.

 Voluntary Services also receives generous donations from numerous private individuals, area businesses, and community organizations that fuel the myriad services it offers.

 There is no easy way of expressing the importance of our Volunteers’ contributions to the Veterans of the Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center. We could not complete our mission of serving our nation’s heroes without the assistance of our loyal Volunteers.