



**Scott R. Isaacks, FACHE**  
Medical Center Director

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

#### Virtual Veterans Day Parade

November 11<sup>th</sup>, 12 p.m.

[Ralph H. Johnson Facebook Page](#)

### SUICIDE PREVENTION TAKES EVERYONE!

*#BeThere*

#### Veterans Crisis Line:

1-800-273-8255 and Press 1

#### Online chat at:

[www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net)

Text: 838255



**VA**

Ralph H. Johnson  
VA Medical Center



**2,032**

**Families Served**

# MONTHLY REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR



## COVID Update

We are fortunate here in Charleston that the number of COVID-positive patients in our facility continues to decrease, and we are approaching what can best be described as our new normal. VAMCs across the country have always cared for infectious patients, and COVID-19 will continue to be part of our daily lives for the foreseeable future. Rest assured, we are working hard to meet our goal of being fully operational at all service levels as quickly and safely as possible.

As a High Reliability Organization, the safety of Veterans and staff is paramount as we consider the provision of health care services during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Before any clinical care is delivered, safe infrastructure and support must be in place. We are closely monitoring community spread and working with partners such as the Centers for Disease Control, South Carolina Hospital Association, Department of Health and Environmental Control and Veterans Victory House.

We slowed our re-opening plans in June and July as the number of cases increased in our state. That trend is now changing. At the peak of the pandemic, the medical center had a high of 21 COVID positive inpatients, but on Sept. 24, 2020, we reached the incredible milestone of having none. Community hospitals are also experiencing a decrease in COVID positive inpatients.

## Moving forward

We are diligently working to reschedule all of our OR cases, as well as other procedural areas, which will allow us to get back to normal operations. Primary Care and Mental Health remained at 100% of previous workload throughout the pandemic by moving seamlessly into virtual care options for our patients. As we move forward, we continue to increase Specialty Care access for our patients. Dental is now open and operating at nearly 100% of its normal caseload. Additionally, we've purchased new equipment to provide safe care

in that area as well as added additional time in between patients to allow the room to rest when there are aerosol procedures.

## As we welcome patients back

We continually evaluate our no-visitor policy and while we are allowing some exceptions for caregivers of inpatients; we are not allowing visitors under age 18. We regularly review this policy based on the data as it relates to the safety of our patients and our staff. Updates are always available on our website. We continue to maximize virtual care options as this is a safe and effective – and often more effective – means of providing treatment to our Veterans. We continue to follow physical distancing and environmental cleaning recommendations outlined by the CDC, and our staff is screening everyone who enters our facility for fever and other signs of COVID-19 infection. We are requiring everyone entering our facilities to wear a face covering and wash their hands/use hand sanitizer.

## Flu Shots

This year it is more important than ever for Veterans to protect themselves by getting the flu shot. We recognize that a season with influenza and COVID-19 could have serious impact on our Veterans. We have developed a plan to provide vaccinations to Veterans and staff in a safe and convenient manner that follows COVID-19 safety precautions.

Flu vaccines are now available to our Veterans at no cost. Enrolled Veterans can receive a flu





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shot at our VA Medical Center at 109 Bee Street from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday-Friday at the West Entrance or in our front lobby. To view a comprehensive list of how and when Veterans can get their flu shots at our medical center and at each of our community clinics please visit [www.charleston.va.gov/flu.asp](http://www.charleston.va.gov/flu.asp). Veterans enrolled in VA care also can receive a free flu shot at any CVS Caremark partner in the community. Veterans will need to bring their VA ID with them and then update their VA primary care doctor that they have received the vaccination.

Let's all work together this year to keep our Veterans and our community safe and healthy.

Respectfully,

Scott R. Isaacks Director & CEO

### COVID-19 Care & Testing

Veterans experiencing symptoms – fever, new or worsening chronic cough, new or worsening chronic shortness of breath – should call our Telephone Advice Program (TAP) line at (843) 789-6400 or 1-888-878-6884 to speak with a nurse. Staff are available 24/7 for nurse advice and triage. You may be referred from VA to MUSC Health or VA clinics in Savannah, Hinesville or Myrtle Beach for drive-through testing. Testing referral and appointments are required. Read VA's latest information on the new coronavirus at <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/>.



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