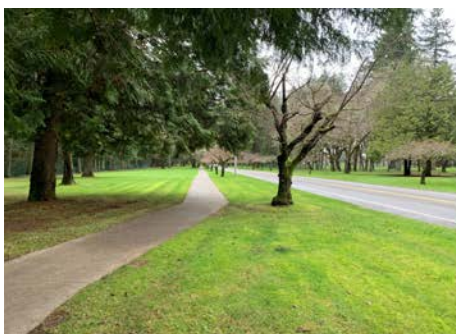


VA PUGET SOUND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Annual Report



Fiscal Year **2021**

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Puget Sound Health Care System





“At VA Puget Sound Health Care System,
our mission is to provide world-class care
to improve the health and well-being of
our nation’s Veterans, driven by a culture of
innovation, collaboration, respect and learning.”

*Michael Tadych, FACHE
VA Puget Sound Health Care System Executive Director*



“The challenges faced by our health care system are complex, daunting and global. It is within this context that our VA Puget Sound team continuously strives to improve services, systems and outcomes. Maintaining the focus on our Veterans, embodying the ICARE values and selflessly serving others is what truly sets us apart.”

Thomas Bundt, PhD, MBA, MHA, MA, MSS, FACHE

VA Puget Sound Health Care System Deputy Executive Director



“We’ve experienced growth in unique population in last 10 years while space essentially unchanged. To address the space constraints, we continue to invest in renovations and new construction projects to bring our facilities on par with the expert patient-centered care our VA Puget Sound has been delivering for almost 100 years.”

Kathryn Sherrill, MSW, LCSW, BSN

VA Puget Sound Health Care System Deputy Director



“We use data to improve the care we provide to patients, monitor use of important resources, and to identify novel ways to enhance the health of veterans and people around the globe.”

Catherine Kaminetzky, MD, MPH

VA Puget Sound Health Care System Chief of Staff



“Throughout VA Puget Sound Nursing Services, we are laser-focused on providing qualified, competent and compassionate care to those we care for.”

Geraldine L'Heureux, MBA, MHA, BSN, RN

VA Puget Sound Health Care System Deputy Director of Patient Care Services

“As we continue to press forward during this unprecedented pandemic, we commit to prioritizing the health and well-being of every Veteran we care for and the staff who care for them across all sites of care in our organization.”

Simon Kim, PhD
VA Puget Sound Health Care System Associate Director



“We continually strive to meet and exceed the expectations of our Veterans and their families.”

Connie Morantes, MD, FACP
VA Puget Sound Health Care System Deputy Chief of Staff



“Our compassionate and dedicated VA Puget Sound nursing staff helps ensure the best health outcomes for our Veterans.”

Pamela Popplewell, DPN, RN, ANP-BC
VA Puget Sound Health Care System Assistant Director of Patient Care Services



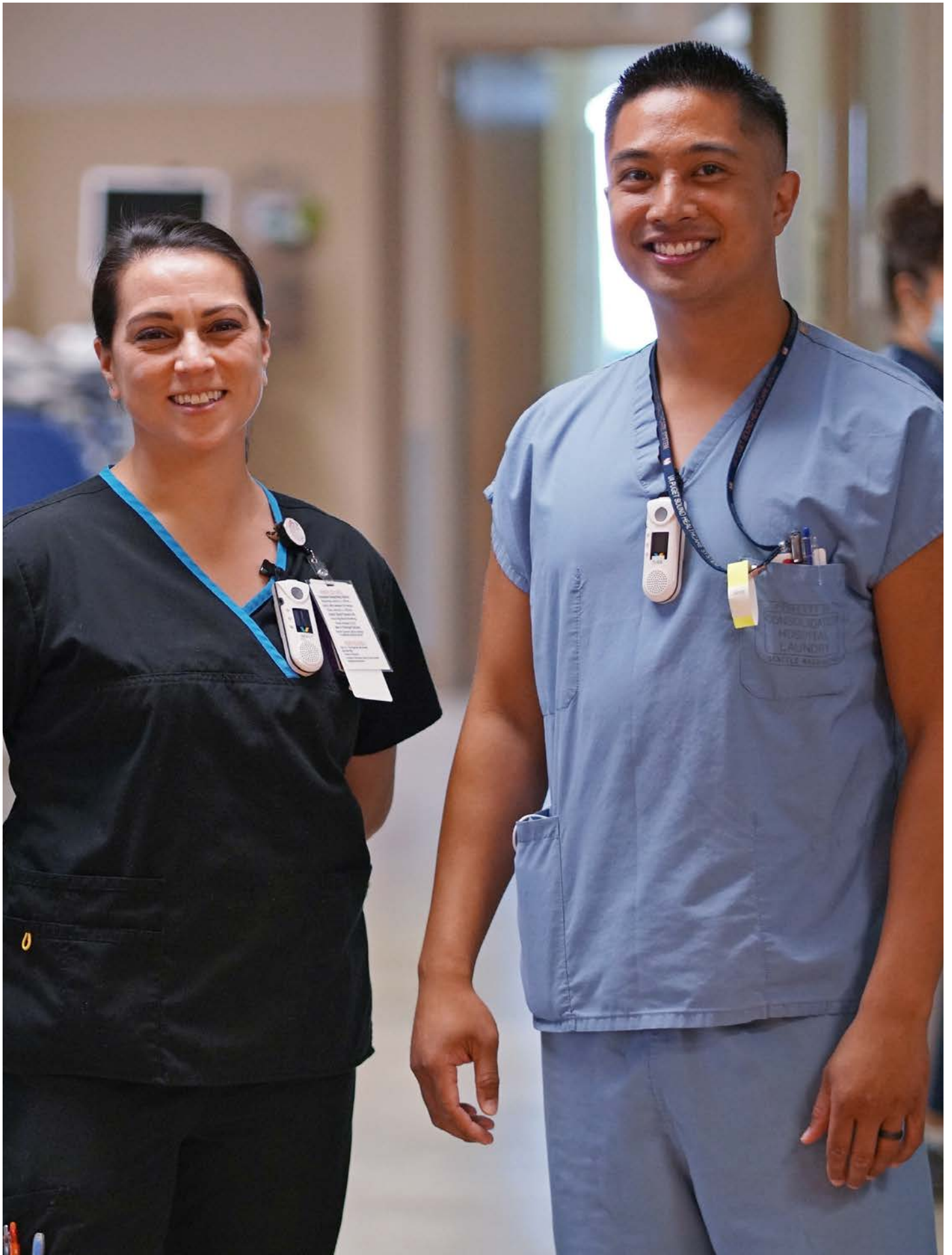




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SNAPSHOT

Patient
Population:

118,929

Patient
Growth:

5.4%
over last
2 years

Women
Veterans:

13.1%
growth over
2 years

Admissions:

4,724

Average
Daily Census:

189

Operational Beds:

408

Bed Days of Care:

68,840

Surgeries
Performed:

4,120





Outpatient Visits: **937,283**

Seattle	–	645,949
American Lake	–	353,141
Mount Vernon	–	52,697
Silverdale	–	39,361
South Sound	–	13,914
North Olympic	–	13,620
Edmonds	–	4,507
Olympia	–	1,634
Puyallup	–	2,245
Federal Way	–	1,548
North Seattle	–	1,479
Bellevue	–	1,158
Mobile Medical Unit	–	609



Expanding Access with Telehealth Services

VA Puget Sound offers telehealth services at all our care sites to improve access to care and health outcomes for our Veterans in more than 50 telehealth areas from mental health, pain and podiatry to amputee and lung transplant care.

42,665	Unique Telehealth Users
173,592	Encounters
2,110	Home Telehealth
160,585	Clinical Video Telehealth
10,896	Store and Forward Telehealth
42.9%	of our patients who participated in at least one virtual care modality
277,754	Secure messages sent



Improving Health Outcomes through Clinical Research

R&D continues to play a vital role in the Department of Veterans Affairs mission, and nowhere is this more evident than at VA Puget Sound Health Care System. Our R&D program—the 4th largest in the VA—reflects our commitment to providing the highest quality of care to our Veterans. Research in the VA has always provided a valuable tool for recruitment of the best qualified physicians and scientific staff. Together with the University of Washington School of Medicine, VA Puget Sound's premier academic medicine program ensures professional staff deliver the highest caliber quality of care by providing access to the latest pharmaceutical therapies and diagnostic techniques. The cohesiveness and strength of VA Puget Sound's research community is felt throughout the not only the Pacific Northwest, but across the nation.

VA Puget Sound R&D principal investigators represent virtually every major clinical department within the health care system, and include research areas such as traumatic brain injury, multiple blast exposures, memory improvement, Alzheimer's disease, post-traumatic

stress disorder, deployment health, Parkinson's disease, diabetes, cancer, substance abuse, lower limb prosthetics, genomics and health services. This was expanded since the pandemic to include COVID-19 related research. The effects of our strong R&D program go well beyond recruitment of high-quality clinical staff. Currently, VA Puget Sound R&D leverages a budget of approximately \$30 million annually in VA funding and another \$19 million in non-VA funds (including support from National Institutes of Health, Department of Defense, volunteer health organizations, academic institutions, and the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries) to manage over 700 active research projects, conducted by over 500 VA and non-VA professional, technical and support staff—163 are principal investigators. This research is supported by a significant amount of high-tech research equipment and other resources, such as dedicated research laboratories, core facilities and more than 100,000 square feet of office space.

Federal News Network, November 3, 2020: After years of practice, VA says its innovation ecosystem was ready-made for the pandemic:

"Employees from VA Puget Sound Health Care System in Washington developed new shields to place between optometrists and their patients, so doctors could more safely perform eye exams during the pandemic."



Parkinson's

7 Nationally Recognized Centers of Excellence

VA Puget Sound has seven nationally recognized Centers of Excellence (in areas from limb-loss prevention and prosthetic engineering to primary care education and substance abuse treatment):

SPOTLIGHT:

Northwest Parkinson's Disease Research, Education and Clinical Center

The Northwest Parkinson's Disease Research, Education and Clinical Center (NW PADRECC) is one of six VA Centers of Excellence for Parkinson's disease funded by national VA. It is comprised of two sites at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System and VA Portland Health Care System. The mission of the NW PADRECC is to provide exceptional care that improves the health and well-being of Veterans with Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders through the integration of research, education, and clinical care. The service area for the NW PADRECC is extensive including the VA Northwest Network (VISN20) comprised of Oregon, Washington and Alaska, and outside VISN20 consortium centers Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Nebraska, South Dakota and Iowa.

The PADRECC teams are composed of expert neurologists, neurosurgeons, nurses, and researchers who work closely with allied health professionals and consulting providers from other fields of health care. This structure allows each center to provide outstanding multidisciplinary care, support cutting edge research, and train the next generation of clinicians to care for Veterans with Parkinson's disease.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Clinicians provided care to 2,699 Veterans with Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders through 5,737 encounters.
- Telemedicine visits were greatly expanded to meet the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Ready access to outpatient clinics was maintained, with most new patients scheduled within 2-3 weeks of referral and virtually all new patients scheduled within 30-45 days.
- Monthly virtual Parkinson's disease support groups provided Veterans and their caregivers with education about a variety of topics and information about useful community resources and services.
- Veterans were enrolled in 12 clinical research studies seeking to better understand and treat Parkinson's disease and related disorders.
- Provided clinical training to a total of 99 medical students, interns, residents, and fellows. Three fellows specifically trained as movement disorder specialists graduated and began practicing in the Pacific Northwest.
- Investigators were supported by 39 grants from the National Institutes of Health, VA and non-profit organizations totaling \$23,472,705.
- Faculty authored 41 articles, presented 16 abstracts, and gave 67 invited lectures.

On Forefront Of Innovation

VA Puget Sound is part of the VHA Innovators Network, helping frontline employees develop innovative ideas and diffuse those ideas across the enterprise to provide superior care and the best health outcomes to our Veterans. VA Ventures, a “National Center for Innovation to Impact” in VA, is an innovation incubator designed to promote early collaboration between VA, academia, start-ups, and industry. The major focus areas of VA Ventures are healthcare product development using advanced manufacturing techniques such as 3D and bioprinting; as well as leveraging artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning and immersive technologies as digital solutions to health care challenges.

- VA Ventures is relentlessly focused on developing products to support our Veterans and healthcare workers. VA Ventures is an U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) registered medical device manufacturer and is partnered with the other two such registered VA advanced manufacturing sites located at VA Charleston and Richmond health systems. Together, this network is working with clinical and operational stakeholders across the VA to develop: (1) digital and physical models to support personalized oromaxillofacial surgical needs, (2) personalized radiation treatment therapy devices (boluses) to improve dose delivery, (3) dental splints to protect patients’ teeth, (4) a novel ear stent for patients suffering from a rare condition leading to hearing loss, and (5) a protective device for patients who use oxygen. These devices are being developed under a Quality Management System (QMS) and to the fulfillment of FDA requirements for medical device fabrication, submission for approval/clearance, and listing.
- In support of this product development, VA Ventures collaborated with the Advanced Manufacturing hub site under the guidance of Greg Voss from the Minneapolis VA Health Care Systems Adaptive Design and Engineering (MADE) to develop a QMS under the VA’s Discovery, Education and Affiliate Networks (DEAN) office. This QMS guides and documents the intake, development, manufacturing, regulation and release of products made by these Advanced Manufacturing hubs. This establishes VA Puget Sound Health Care System as one of three National VA locations that are manufacturing under compliance with the Food and Drug Administration and Good Manufacturing Processes.
- VA Ventures seeks to bolster technology that directly impacts VHA’s ability to care for Veterans. One of Ventures’ focus areas, for example, is driven by VHA surgeons’ needs for a viable alternative to existing bone graft options. Bones grafts are used to replace a piece of a patient’s bone that is lost to trauma, infection or a tumor. Bone grafts from natural sources are in limited supply, can fail, and can lead to long healing times when sourced from the patient. To address this VA Ventures is leading the BIOBONE project in collaboration with Advanced Solutions Life Sciences, which lays the foundation for fabricating patient-matched living grafts for bone repair. Ultimately, the BIOBONE project aims to 3D print customized living bone tissues for any Veteran in need within VAMCs.
- VA Ventures and VA’s Office of Research and Development collaborated to establish the Biofabrication Community of Science (CoS), a network of researchers, innovators, clinicians, engineers, and other staff members developing an integrated infrastructure to provide Veterans with customized biofabricated solutions. Biofabrication is the process of using bioengineering principles with biological materials and cells to manufacture constructs for medical applications; for example, using bioprinting and bioassembly to repair, replace, or treat damaged or diseased tissues. The CoS is building a robust network of internal and external stakeholders across the biofabrication continuum to learn, ideate, research, and build solutions for Veterans.
- VA Ventures developed a universal Powered Air Purifying Respirator (PAPR) hood to protect healthcare providers from exposure to infectious disease. The hood is interchangeable across multiple respirator systems, is designed for cleanability, and uses U.S. sourced materials. 100 hoods were delivered to VA Puget Sound Health Care System and license agreements provide a pathway for healthcare systems across the U.S. to obtain this product. Through a cooperative research and development agreement, a complete PAPR system was developed and received Public Health Emergency approval from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Our collaborator has deployed over 250 of these systems around the world, to India, Africa and South America.



Expanded Care Through Regional Hubs

Along with caring for Veterans enrolled at one of our facilities, VA Puget Sound offers Veterans from a five-state area in the Pacific Northwest specialized care through its regional hubs:

SPOTLIGHT:

Blind Rehabilitation

VA Puget Sound's Blind Rehabilitation Center at our American Lake campus is one of 13 in the VA Blind Rehabilitation continuum of care. The center provides comprehensive, individualized rehabilitation services in an inpatient facility by a multidisciplinary team of rehabilitation specialists including blind rehabilitation, nursing, social work, psychology, recreation therapy and low vision optometry/eye care. Blind Rehabilitation specialists provide assessment and therapeutic instruction in orientation and mobility, activities of daily living, assistive technology, adaptive vision skills, and manual skills therapy.

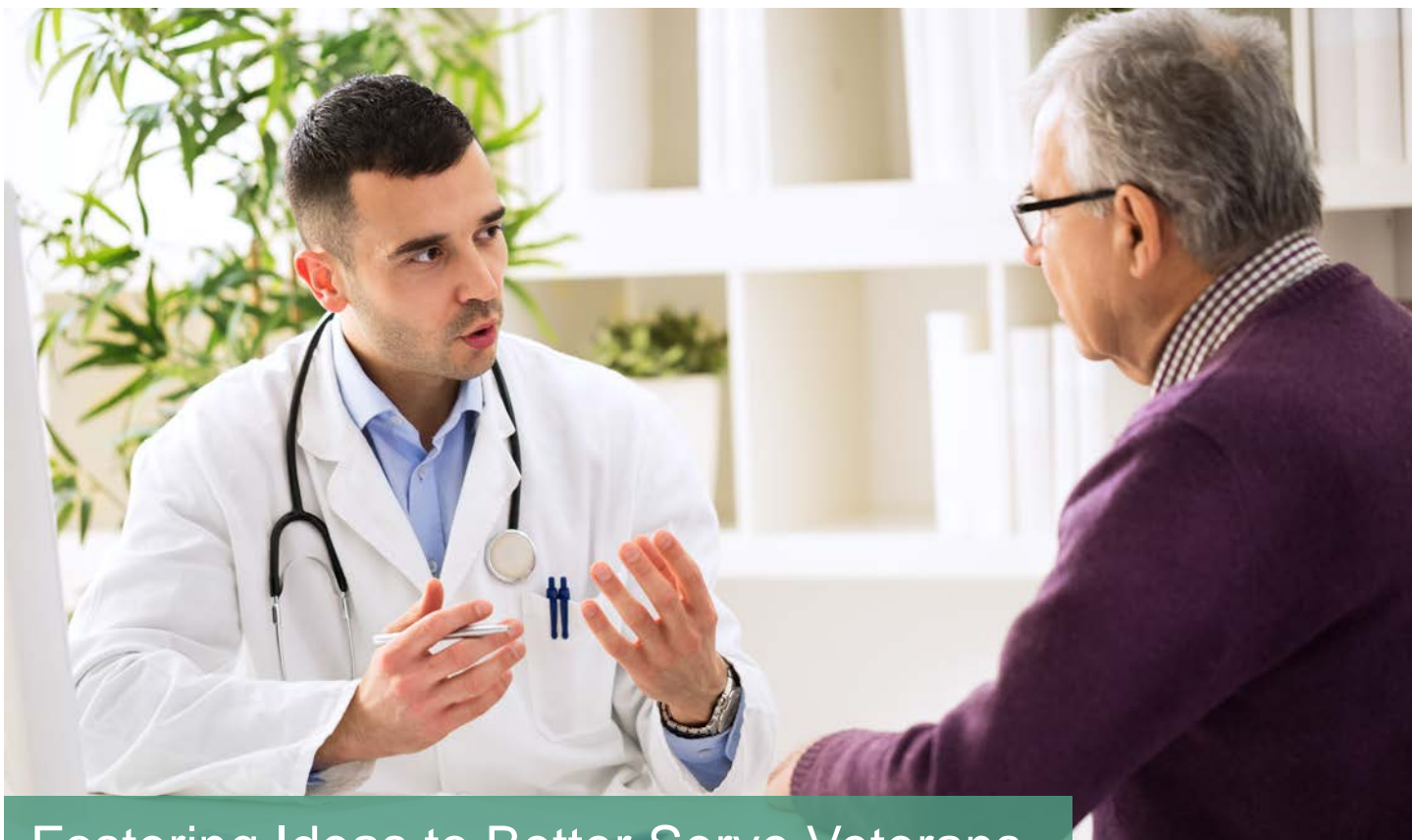
HIGHLIGHTS:

- Provides inpatient blind rehabilitation for Veterans and active-duty service members with visual impairments from VA's Northwest Network (VISN 20) and Montana.
- Offers outpatient low vision optometry services, care coordination, and blind rehabilitation home training to VA Puget Sound Veterans through Low Vision Clinic, Visual Impairment Service team coordinators, and Blind Rehabilitation outpatient specialist.
- Provides direct VA Video Connect services as well as training Veterans with vision loss to use telehealth modalities with access technology.

Our mission is to inspire hope and improve the lives of Veterans affected by vision loss.

The Seattle Times, December 7, 2020: VA Puget Sound to open four new clinics while closing three others:

“Three new clinics are scheduled to open by April in Edmonds, Olympia and Puyallup. The VA also announced the groundbreaking of a \$10 million, 26,000-square-foot outpatient clinic in Everett that is scheduled to open late in 2021.”



Fostering Ideas to Better Serve Veterans

The primary focus of process improvement efforts in Fiscal Year 2021 was to sustain the infrastructure created during the previous year, namely the project review and coaching services offered through the VA Puget Sound Health Care System Process Improvement Network, leverage that infrastructure to support High Reliability Organization (HRO) transformation, and expand staff training opportunities by resuming Lean yellow belt instruction and redoubling efforts to recruit frontline personnel to lead projects with Office of Transformation (Systems Redesign & Improvement) contributing technical expertise.

Overall, these aims have been fulfilled, VA Puget Sound network utilization still exceeding 100 percent of regularly offered coaching slots (in all, 53 hours were delivered to 36 distinct project teams in the fiscal year), and the health system continues to maintain a steady state of around 110-120 active improvement efforts at any given time. Of the currently active works, Office of Transformation is leading or consulting on 27 percent of the total catalog.

One improvement project, the Expedited After-Hours ST-Elevation Myocardial Infarction Interfacility Transfer Protocol, continues to provide Veterans presenting with potentially fatal heart attack a fast and reliable pathway to receive life-saving cardiac intervention. Previously nominated for a national HeRO award (the highest level of HRO recognition available within the VA), this project also garnered top honors in the VA Northwest Network—VISN20—4th Annual Improvement Forum. It continues

to be used once per month, on average, and saves the medical center approximately \$150,000 annually by avoiding the cost of operating a 24-hour catheter laboratory.

This past year has seen closer integration of Patient Safety, Office of Transformation, and HRO activities under the Quality, Safety and Value Service Line, with each member in this triad frequently assisting the other two (for instance, through completion of root cause analyses or delivery of educational content).

Additionally, the innovation ecosystem has been busy steadily designing, creating, and deploying novel health care solutions, everything from 3D-printed personalized surgical planning aids to an entire Prosthetics and Orthotics Clinic on wheels.

***Edmonds Beacon, July 18, 2021:
New VA clinic brings care closer to
home for Edmonds veterans***

***“Veterans living in Edmonds no longer
need to venture outside city lines to
receive outpatient medical care and other
services through the Department
of Veterans Affairs.”***

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Through our diversity and inclusion programs, VA Puget Sound is growing a diverse workforce and cultivating an inclusive work environment, where our staff are fully engaged and empowered to deliver the outstanding services to our nation's Veterans and their families.

Our staff-driven Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee (DEIC) promotes these practices within the workforce and in clinical practice. Our DEIC conducted the facility's first annual all staff DEI Climate Survey. The survey was designed to provide our leadership and staff with information regarding employees' experiences with and perceptions of the extent to which the work climate at VA Puget Sound is inclusive and equitable for employees who identify as being from traditionally dominant and from traditionally minoritized groups.

Approximately 2,000 employees participated in the survey, representing approximately 42 percent of the workforce in place during that time.

VA Puget Sound's DEIC studied the survey results and subsequently formed three sub-committees to address the concerns raised: (1) communication and data, (2) education, training and hiring and (3) retention. Additionally, there are at least 14 active grassroots DEI committees and workgroups engaging in this work aimed at supporting exceptionally equitable and an inclusive work environment that is healthy for employees and meets the needs of all the Veterans we serve.

Other programs include:

For Veterans:

- LGBTQ+ Program
- Women Veterans Health Committee

Staff:

- Hispanic Heritage
- Black Employment
- Disability
- Asian Pacific Islanders
- Native American
- Federally Employed Women
- LGBTQ+



DIVERSITY

***MyEverettNews.com, December 9, 2020:
More Details On Veterans Outpatient
Clinic Coming To Everett***

"The new care facilities are further proof of VA Puget Sound's commitment to expanding primary care locations to make getting care easier for our 155,000 enrolled Veterans across Western Washington," said VA Puget Sound Director Michael Tadych. "What's more, the expanded primary care services are designed to complement the community care options already available to Veterans under the MISSION Act."

Community Housing and Outreach Services Program and Justice Outreach

- Staff: 100+ full-time multi-disciplinary team members, including social workers, addiction counselors, physicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, occupational therapists, housing specialists, peer support specialists, and administrative support.
- Grant and Per Diem (GPD): Local grantees were awarded grants beginning on October 1, 2021 to offer transitional housing to Veterans experiencing homelessness.
 - 5 Transitional housing programs offering all 5 models of care with a total of 181 beds.
 - 1 Transition-in-Place housing program model with 20 units.
- Emergency Housing: 2 Contracted Residential Services programs with a total of 32 beds.
- Drop-In Services: Seattle-based Community Resource & Referral Center (CRRC) offering short-term case management services and support.
- National Call Center for Homeless Veterans: Outreach social workers responded to 1,106 Homeless Call Center calls, offering local information and resources to Veterans who are homeless or are at risk for homelessness.
- Answered 511 hospital-based consults: Outreach social workers respond to consults initiated by VA providers, offering local information and resources to Veterans who identify as homeless during medical/mental health appointments.
- HUD-VASH: 2, 987 HUD-VASH vouchers distributed by 12 public housing authorities in 11 counties. New FY21 (yet to be officially announced) will push VAPS over 3,000 HUD-VASH vouchers.
 - 5 new HUD-VASH Project Based programs opened with 114 units across the region.
 - Roll out of new enhanced eligibility criteria for HUD-VASH.
 - Expansion of SSVF to HUD-VASH (Progressive Engagement) with 82 housing placements
 - CHOS HUD-VASH program is first in the nation to pilot a Case Management. Collaborative (CCM) with community partners to utilize 142 HUD-VASH vouchers in more creative ways.
- Veterans Justice Programs: 7 Veteran Treatment Courts across five counties.
- New Rideshare partnership: homeless programs staff can access this transportation resource for Veterans in need.
- H-PACT collaboration with Project-based programs for on-site primary care and with the CRRC for provision on on-site services.
- 3-Year CARF Accreditation
- Successful completion of Joint Commission mock audit (VISN-led)
- COVID-19 vaccination clinics and staff details to support hospital-based efforts.
 - Region 10 Interagency Council on Homelessness presentation by frontline staff regarding rural vaccination clinics.
 - Testing sites, vaccination support, inpatient coverage.
 - Response to outbreaks in project-based sites and GPD programs.
 - Development of GPD/CRS program COVID-19 policies for pre-admission and response.

VAntage Point, May 11, 2021: VHA IE Trailblazers: Eli Kaufman is bringing prosthetic and orthotic care home to Veterans

“The team piloted a mobile version of a prosthetic lab that fits in a standard car and allowed Veterans to receive their new prosthetic devices, have them properly fit, and engage with a prosthetist much closer to home, or in many cases, at home. Launched at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System and supported through the VHA Innovators Network Spark-Seed-Spread Innovation Investment Program, the project was highly successful in getting Veterans – some who had been lacking in care for years – the artificial limb care that they needed. Not only were Veterans happy with the service, but it saved VA on costs compared to contracted providers and meant far less travel for Veterans.”

Customer Experience

VA Puget Sound's priority is to ensure the best Veteran care experience. And it's our Patient Experience Office that is charged with understanding the experiences of all those who served in uniform, and are served by VA. With these insights we are building a world-class patient experience by keeping our Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors at the center of everything we do.

In Fiscal Year 2021, the team addressed several trends to improve provider-to-patient communications, hospital noise, and to improve timeliness of processing community care referrals. Additional effort focused on Women's health and addressed access to care issues for both women and LGBTQ+ Veterans. In fact, VA Puget Sound participated in its first bi-annual Women Veterans Health Care Town Hall which brought together women's health experts from across VA's Northwest Network. Understanding that improving access to VA's resources with equity starts with listening to the voice of the Veteran community, VA Puget Sound is holding quarterly women Veteran focus groups to better understand considerations specific to their care. VA Puget Sound also just completed a two-year pilot test assigning nurse case managers to the customer service team to identify and assist patients who have multiple complex care issues with their care coordination. This successful pilot resulted in the permanent funding of two of these important nurse positions addressing the timeliness and accuracy of care coordination.

The team also continues to study Veteran survey responses to monitor and address trends in customer satisfaction. For example, the team is working hard across the health care system to improve the speed and quality of ordering and delivery of eyeglasses, reduce appointment wait times, and improve care coordination for Veterans with complex health needs.

VA is also using automated tools to quickly triage cases needing immediate assistance. When Veterans leave a survey comment that indicates they might be at risk for suicide and/or homelessness, VSignals uses natural language processing and artificial intelligence to route the message to the team best suited to respond, such as the Veterans Crisis Line or National Call Center for Homeless Veterans.

Quality Care

- The Joint Commission Gold Seal
- ALS Association Certified Treatment Center of Excellence
- American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's Get With The Guidelines® Target:
- Stroke Gold Plus and Target: Type 2 Diabetes Honor Roll quality achievement awards
- Commission on Cancer Care Accredited
- CARF accredited programs:
 - Community Housing and Outreach Services
 - Community Reintegration Services (employment services)
 - Mental Health Intensive Case Management
 - Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Program (domiciliary)
 - Homeless Care
 - PTSD
 - Substance Abuse
 - Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Residence
 - Pain Program
 - Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center
 - Rehabilitation Care Services
 - Inpatient Rehabilitation
 - Amputation Specialty Program
 - Stroke Specialty Program
 - Blind Rehabilitation
 - Spinal Cord Injury Unit
- Patient Aligned Care Team performance measures:
 - 31.32 percent of our Veterans see the same primary care provider each visit.
 - 71.34 percent of Veteran visits received care by phone.
 - 27.78 percent of same-day appointments.
 - 79.21 percent of patients get an appointment within 7 days of their preference.



Caring for Our Most Vulnerable Veterans During COVID-19

Over the last year, homeless programs at VA Puget Sound have continued to care for some of our most vulnerable Veterans, focusing on their safety during the pandemic, while finding ways to house Veterans more quickly and support those who have come through the trauma of homelessness.

In terms of COVID-19, we quickly brought vaccines to our Veterans in permanent supportive housing buildings, transitional housing, and shelters. Understanding that many of our Veterans come from historically marginalized communities, and that many have had prior struggles interacting with health care systems, we focused on creating materials to address vaccine hesitancy and engaged in targeted outreach to Veterans to answer questions and build trust. We were then able to share our practice and protocols with other VA programs nationally, helping others offer the same service.

Our homeless primary care team (HPACT) has grown over this last year, bringing on both additional nursing support and new physicians, including a part-time psychiatrist and a part-time addiction medicine specialist. This has allowed us to increase outreach into the community, not just to

additional community shelter sites, but also to supportive housing buildings. Veterans who had been struggling with isolation, substance use disorders, and mental health concerns can now be seen at their homes, which has significantly increased engagement with care.

As conditions have become safer for Veterans and staff, we have been increasing our in-person care, including the re-opening of our Community Resource and Referral Center in Seattle to Veterans on a walk-in basis. To support this increase in face-to-face care, not just within homeless programs but across our system, we have also been participating in a successful rideshare pilot, helping Veterans get to their medical appointments more nimbly.

Finally, this year has also seen the opening of five new project-based permanent supportive housing buildings. Working with community partners, we have 114 new units for Veterans across the region. To expedite the housing voucher process, we created an innovative partnership with the King County Veteran's Program, training their case managers to help Veterans get vouchered and housed.

News Tribune, December 11, 2020: VA Puget Sound will be among first to get newly approved COVID-19 vaccine

"The 37 medical centers, including VA Puget Sound, were chosen out of the VA's more than 170 medical centers because they can store the vaccine at extremely cold temperatures and because of their ability to vaccinate large numbers of people. VA Puget Sound serves more than 155,000 veterans in Washington and is home to the VA's 5th largest research program."

Electronic Health Record Modernization

In May 2018, VA Puget Sound Health Care System and Mann-Grandstaff (Spokane) VA Medical Center were identified as the Initial Operating Capability (IOC) sites for the implementation of Cerner as our new Electronic Health Record (EHR) platform to help to ensure complete and accurate health records are shared seamlessly across VA, Department of Defense, and community providers.

The EHR Modernization implementation project work slowed during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, picked back up a bit during Fall 2021, and resumed work in earnest January 2021 towards a hoped-for fall 2021 go-live. In Spring 2021, VA national leadership pause all planned go-lives and related work for a strategic review because Spokane VA staff continued to struggle with inefficiencies and operational problems using the new EHR. In July 2021, the Strategic Review team shared a Lessons Learned report outlining areas of focus to improve the EHR and staff and veteran experience in Spokane. Issues such as patient safety concerns, inadequate training, project governance, and veteran experience would focus the work of national EHRM project leadership for the remainder of calendar year 2021 with no new schedules or go-live dates set until end of year. Meanwhile, at VA Puget Sound, many of our staff worked diligently on configuring their area of expertise in the EHR; some doing national-level new EHR content building, others validating the national EHR workflows for feasibility at VA Puget Sound. Many also worked on providing information about VA Puget Sound to Cerner for configuration of our local build of the EHR.

By being one of the first facilities to implement the new EHR, this is an exciting opportunity for VA Puget Sound to help shape the new modernized EHR for all of Veterans Health Administration. As part of the implementation team, we will help refine the new EHR by capitalizing on lessons learned from Department of Defense, and now VA Mann-Grandstaff, which will help improve the roll-out process for all of VA.

Whether our staff members are in direct patient care or provide behind-the-scenes support, they all will play a part in facilitating the transition and the implementation of this new EHR. Like most change and innovation periods, this move will likely be frustrating, including the stops and starts we have experienced this past year. Members of the leadership team are working hard to ensure both staff and Veterans being served have what is needed to minimize disruptions during the transition.

The new EHR is another indication of the VA's commitment to transform this agency. The events of the past year show us that patient safety, staff efficiency, and veteran experience are top priorities.

Mukilteo Beacon, January 7, 2021: VA Puget Sound Health Care System to open new facilities

"A new community-based outpatient clinic in Everett will bring quality, accessible health care and services closer to roughly 8,000 north sound veterans," said Rep. Rick Larsen (D-District 2), a senior member of the House Armed Services Committee. "Thank you to the local veterans, community stakeholders and VA Puget Sound Health Care System leadership who are working hard to make this clinic a reality."



Mental Health and Suicide Prevention a Continued Priority

Suicide Prevention continues to be a top priority across the VA. Nationally, there were 399 fewer Veteran suicide deaths in 2019 (the most recent year that data is available) compared to 2018. By continuing to make suicide prevention everyone's business, we are committing ourselves to reaching out to those Veterans in need of behavioral health assessment and treatment.

With 3,312 total Veteran Crisis Line (VCL) consults in Fiscal Year 2021, VA Puget Sound remains in the top five most frequent VCL referral sites nationally, with more than three times the VA average number of crisis line referrals. The steady increase in the number of referrals received from the Veteran's Crisis Line suggests that the VA Puget Sound Veteran community is aware of—and willing to utilize—this important entry point for VA mental health services. And the suicide prevention team prioritizes responsiveness to these calls, making an outreach attempt to 98.8 percent of those consults in less than 24 hours, and successfully contacting 80 percent of those Veterans in the first day of receiving the consult.

At any given time, VA Puget Sound works closely with an average of 115 Veterans who have been determined to be at particularly high clinical risk for suicide via the High-Risk Flag Program. Nearly 100 additional Veterans who have been identified as extremely high statistical risk for suicide are also closely monitored to ensure suicide risk is actively managed.

Regular caring contact is made with all Veterans whose high-risk flags have been removed in the last 12 months. Caring contacts are also offered to Veterans who discharge from VA Puget Sound's High Acuity Inpatient Psychiatric Unit, and they are sent to many additional Veterans identified by the REACH VET suicide prevention program. For Fiscal Year 2021, more than 1,700 caring cards were sent to Veterans across the region, offering an additional path for staying connected to care.

The Suicide Prevention Team is also heavily engaged in the ongoing education of our providers and partners who serve Veterans. In Fiscal Year 2021, we provided training on suicide prevention best practices to 221 providers who work with Veterans, both inside and outside of the VA. In addition, 124 virtual outreach activities were held, reaching more than 3,269 Veterans, family members, and community agencies directly. This includes a suicide prevention training specifically focused on indigenous Veterans across the Puget Sound region that is currently being adopted and tailored to indigenous communities served by other VA facilities across the country.

Women's Health

VA Puget Sound's Women's Health Program remains the largest in VISN 20 (the VA's Northwest Network), with over 17,000 women Veterans (and growing!) enrolled for care.

A team of over 60 women's health primary care providers deliver comprehensive, collaborative, and trauma-informed care at all our primary care locations, ensuring our women vets do not have to travel outside of their local medical home for their health care needs. We have expanded services to include long-acting reversible contraception and contraception-on-demand at nearly all our sites of care.

Our Women's Health clinics at the Seattle and American Lake campuses offer a specialized tier of gender-specific care, co-located with gynecology mental health, social work, pharmacy, and excellent nurse care managers. Comprehensive services by a multi-disciplinary team, including physicians, gynecologists, mental health experts, social workers, pharmacists, and nurses are provided at our Women's Health Clinics at Seattle and American Lake campuses.

This year we also expanded our program to include reproductive endocrinology and enhanced lactation services in addition to our already robust perinatal and breast coordination.

We also have a broad network of community providers we partner with in care areas such as mammography, maternity, specialty breast care and infertility treatment.

Our Mental Health Team offers extensive women's mental health-focused consultative groups and virtual patient education programs to include women's pain and health self-management. Additionally, planning and renovation our Women's Residential Treatment Program at our American Lake campus (Building 5) are well underway.

KING 5, March 4, 2021: Western Washington veterans of all ages can get vaccine through VA Puget Sound

"All veterans in western Washington, of any age or health condition, who get care from VA Puget Sound are now eligible to get a coronavirus vaccine, the Veterans Affairs Department announced Thursday. "We have gotten to the point now where we can open up eligibility to all health care eligible veterans," said Maureen McClain, who oversees the vaccine process for VA Puget Sound.



Pain Management/Opioid/Pain Telehealth

VA Puget Sound Health Care System Pain Clinics (Seattle and American Lake campuses) offer comprehensive pain-care services to address complex chronic pain. Treatment options available to Veterans include co-disciplinary visits with a medical provider and psychologist simultaneously, pain psychotherapy groups, individual pain psychotherapy, complementary and integrative approaches, pain procedures, opioid tapering, and intensive pain rehabilitation services through the outpatient and residential functional restoration programs.

Collaboration across pain and specialties clinics is an important tenet of both comprehensive pain care and opioid safety, including the Opioid Safety Review Board, Opioid Safety Program, and Stepped Care for Opioid Use Disorder Train the Trainer (SCOUTT) program. In addition, the clinic has emphasized clinician education through the Pain Mini Residency Program, University of Washington School of Medicine student rotations, pain/anesthesia residency and fellowship programs, pain psychology internships and fellowships, and social-work training program.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- VISN20—VA's Northwest Network—TelePain selected as a model for a new national rollout.
- Clinical services expanded at Roseburg, White City and Anchorage and their respective outpatient clinics (11 total). Working with Boise, Walla Walla and Spokane on further service expansions.
- Developed two new training programs at VA Puget Sound (APA-accredited Behavioral Medicine and Pain Psychology fellowship track; social work Substance Use Disorder–Pain internship).
- Supported 9,631 virtual care encounters to 1,191 unique Veterans.
- Delivered 87 percent of Northwest Network's telehealth pain care in Fiscal Year 2021.
- Improved clinical coverage and eConsult responses.
- Multiple quality improvement projects (e.g., improving opioid prescribing safety, mindfulness and pain, measurement-based pain care, Functional Restoration Program, virtual reality, and pre-procedural anxiety).
- Numerous funded research projects (e.g., Integrated treatment for chronic pain and opioid use disorder, chronic knee pain clinical trial, IMPROVE, POSITIVE, COPES EXTRA, QUERI/COIN, career development award).
- Workgroup continues to complete Stratification Tool for Opioid Risk Mitigation STORM reports (154 in fiscal year) and recommendations to service the facility in supporting very high-risk Veterans treated with opioids and those who are not prescribed opioids but are otherwise at very high risk.
- Non-visit eConsults completed (291 in fiscal year) with pain recommendations provided both within the facility and for other sites within the Northwest Network (primarily Alaska)
- Exceeded goal of increasing facility-level dispensing of naloxone to Veterans diagnosed with opioid use disorder by 25 percent, exceeding national average.
- Awarded three-year Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) accreditation in October 2021, underscoring VA Puget Sound's commitment to continually improving services, encouraging feedback, and serving the community.

Volunteers a Critical Part of Our Team

During Fiscal Year 2021, the VA changed the name of Voluntary Service to VA Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE) to better reflect the comprehensive work by full-time and volunteer staff. With a rich and proud legacy of giving that began in 1946, VA CDCE Teams—like VA Puget Sound’s—integrate and coordinate volunteer assistance throughout health care service areas to enhance the Veteran experience.

This includes areas such as onboarding and managing volunteers, receiving, and distributing donations and ongoing collaboration with nationally recognized Veteran Service organizations as well as local and regional community partners.

Though COVID-19 precautions continued to limit volunteer access and activities at VA Puget Sound, its team of volunteers delivered hundreds of hours of support. In addition, the VA Puget Sound CDCE team received more than \$185,000 in monetary and non-monetary donations—all for the direct benefit of Veterans entrusted to us for care.

VA Puget Sound CDCE brings its volunteers and community partners together to enhance the experience of our Veteran patients. Whether it’s our Red Coat Ambassadors greeting and assisting new arrivals, using donations to purchase travel vouchers and gift cards for homeless and at-risk Veterans, funding community reentry outings for rehabilitation patients, Volunteer Network Transportation drivers assisting Veterans with appointment-related travel needs or performing military burial honors at Tahoma National Cemetery, CDCE continues to place Veterans across the Pacific Northwest in the center of all that it does.

VAntage Point, February 18, 2021: Face of InnoVAtion: Dr. Jeffrey Heckman

“There is a lot to Veteran health care that Veterans do not see when they come into a VA Medical Center. For instance, when a Veteran requires a prosthetic, a complex system is triggered for processes to go into effect, often taking weeks for a Veteran to receive the prosthetic they need. It’s not flashy or readily noticeable, but making these systems work better for Veterans is key to making Veteran care better. That is what Dr. Jeffrey Heckman understood when he and his team at VA Puget Sound Health Care System (HCS) developed FLOW3.”

UW Medicine Newsroom, March 5, 2021: App encourages clinical talks about fertility, reproduction

“The lack of open and respectful conversations about people’s reproductive hopes and goals in clinical settings makes it harder for them to get the care they need,” says Dr. Lisa Callegari. She’s an associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Washington School of Medicine and a researcher at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System.

Kitsap Sun, March 5, 2021: Mobile clinic provides COVID-19 vaccinations for rural veterans

“To expand COVID-19 vaccinations to veterans in rural areas, the Veterans Affairs Puget Sound Health Care System is going on the road with a new mobile vaccination clinic, which launched this week in Mason County. More than 100 veterans received their COVID-19 shot throughout the day Thursday at the VA’s first mobile vaccine clinic, a drive-thru site at the Little Creek Casino Resort in Shelton.”

Nurturing Our Nation's Future Medical Professionals

As a teaching hospital, VA Puget Sound continues to provide a full range of services, with state-of-the-art technology as well as education and research. Our academic partners play an invaluable role in driving innovation and collaborative research to improve health outcomes for not only the Veterans entrusted to us, but to help people worldwide.

VA Puget Sound began partnering with the University of Washington School of Medicine in 1951, primarily in the fields of medical, dental, nursing, mental health, and social work. Since then, VA Puget Sound has added other physician affiliation agreements with Madigan Army Medical Center, Swedish Hospital and Seattle Children's Hospital. These future professionals are the nation's health care workforce pipeline who will go on to care for Veterans and other patients in urban and rural communities across the U.S.

VA Puget Sound takes pride in our 70-year history of positive advancements and cutting-edge academic partnership and achievements that continue to improve health outcomes for the Veterans we care for. Our academic collaborations build on our passion to learn and power to heal.

In academic year 2021, VA Puget Sound trained over 1,900 health care professionals—from physicians, dentists and nurses to psychologists and social workers to highlight a few. Through its more than 130 active associated health, graduate medical and dental education and, nursing undergraduate, graduate, and research affiliations in Pacific Northwest and beyond, VA Puget Sound offers innovation and progressive training. And its collaborations with the University of Washington School of Medicine and Seattle Institute for Biomedical and Clinical Research are integral to ongoing discoveries.

During the pandemic, VA facilities such as VA Puget Sound worked with medical schools, universities, and colleges across the country to utilize health professions trainees to care for Veterans virtually and in-person while completing their training requirements. VA Puget Sound continues to advance health professions training by adding new rotations here with Madigan Army Medical Center and securing a new residency in Neurologic Physical Therapy. The number of physician residents training across the VA increased by more than 2,000 and, according to the American Association of Medical Colleges, applications to medical schools have increased by 18 percent for the 2021 academic year.

SPOTLIGHT: Nursing Education

The role of VA Puget Sound's Nursing Education Team is to maintain a highly educated nursing workforce through professional development, competency and skill training implementing evidence-based practice, scope of practice clarification and increasing patient safety. VA Puget Sound offers academic excellence:

- Nursing education has 44 academic affiliations with schools of nursing including University of Washington (Seattle Bothell and Tacoma) Seattle University, Seattle Pacific College, Pacific Lutheran College, Washington State University Gonzaga University and Northwest University.
- As a Northwest Clinical Placement Consortium member, recognized as a premier clinical rotation site for graduate and non-graduate nurses.
- Supported more than 200 graduate and undergraduate nursing students with innovation, state-of-the-art training, despite pandemic.
- Collaboration with University of Washington for its Post Baccalaureate Nurse Residency program.
- Partnerships with Seattle colleges supporting nursing assistants and licensed practice nursing clinical rotations.

Below are highlights from nursing education Fiscal Year 2021 accomplishments:

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Caring for patients with COVID-19 identified an increasing demand for acute care and critical care nurses. Nursing Education served as an invaluable resource for knowledge and education in response to the pandemic by providing essential skill and competency training to ensure safe practice and the delivery of high-quality care for our Veterans. Nursing Education launched an immersive training experience for ambulatory and other specialty nurses to function effectively in an acute care setting. This led to the creation of curriculum for PPE, acute and critical care uptraining, and team programs.

And given donning and doffing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is a required mandatory competency, Nursing Education played an integral role in providing just-in-time training for more than 1,400 clinical staff who had direct patient care including nurses, physicians, and allied health care providers during the pandemic.

ACUTE CARE UPTRAINING

This training is an immersive 8-hour session which covers a variety of acute care concepts and skills in areas such as: interprofessional collaboration, head-to-toe assessments, nursing documentation, focused respiratory assessments, respiratory and oxygen delivery devices, managing a change in patient condition, crash cart reviews, and simulated patient and CODE BLUE responses.

ACUTE CARE SKILLS LAB

This lab focuses on acute care related equipment, competencies and skills from urinary tract infection prevention and blood product transfusions and management to continuous bladder irrigation and telemetry IV push medication reviews.

CRITICAL CARE UPTRAINING

Critical Care is a highly specialized area of nursing which requires extensive knowledge and training. The critical care uptraining course requires over 20 hours of pre-work (online) which covers core concepts of critical care and 24 hours of classroom learning followed by a 1- or 2-week critical care residency. Training is in areas such as mechanical ventilation, Project HAPPEN (Hospital-Acquired Pneumonia Prevention by Engaging Nurses) oral care, air patient lifts, monitor/defibrillators, malignant hyperthermia, introduction to cardiac advanced resuscitation (CSU-ALS), American Heart Association mega-code simulations, stress and burnout prevention and intraosseous simulations.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development is an integral part of the cumulative learning and growth that takes place during a nurse's career after passing the national licensure examination. The Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) has implemented multiple innovative nursing workforce training programs to enhance nursing education and practice. These programs facilitate a stronger and mutually beneficial partnership between the VA to over 1,800 Schools of Nursing across the nation. Each of the residency programs offers unique opportunities to develop competent, confident, practice-ready participants equipped with the knowledge and skills to care for our nation's Veterans.

VA Puget Sound provides oversight to several nurse residency programs aimed to support, recruit, and retain nurses within our workforce.

- **Post Baccalaureate Registered Residency Program:**

In partnership with the University of Washington School of Nursing and OAA, VA Puget Sound received funding and initiated its first program cohort in 2019. Residents recruited are newly graduated Bachelor of Science nurses currently in their first registered nurse role.

The residency program offers lifelong learning and the opportunity to move to nursing leadership roles, while providing excellent and compassionate care to our nation's heroes, our Veterans. Areas of work include primary care, mental health and acute care units. Since the first cohort in 2019, the program has trained nine resident trainees—four gained full-time employment upon completion. The program anticipates Commission Collegiate for Nursing Education accreditation in 2022.

- **VA Learning Opportunities Residency (VALOR):**

This 400-hour clinical residency program is for Bachelor of Science in Nursing students between their junior and senior year. Students are appointed during the summer months and receive a stipend (80 percent of Nurse1/Step1 as defined by Office of Personnel Management Civil Service pay scale). These students continue during their senior academic year and are offered full time positions, with an 80-90 percent employment and retention rate.

- **Transition to Practice:** 12-month residency program designed for new hires graduate registered nurses with less than one year of professional experience. Programs consist of didactic and on unit precepted support. Selected participants start each January.

- **Intermediate Care Technician (ICTs):** Care technicians are former military corpsmen, combat medics and medical technicians functioning in health care roles commensurate with their military experience, education, and training without the need for a license or additional credential. This role provides a higher level of clinical support to Veteran clinical care team. ICTs work as force-multipliers, improving health outcomes, increasing access to care, enhancing team productivity, and increasing Veteran and caregiver satisfaction. VA Puget Sound offers a skills training course for ICTs, collaborating with the emergency department and primary care to facilitate clinical rotations and preceptorship to provide a supportive learning environment.

Fisher House - A Home Away From Home

The VA Puget Sound Fisher House provides a cost free “Home Away from Home” for Veterans, active-duty service members, their families and caregivers, while they are hospitalized or receiving care. The VA Fisher House team works with other VA Puget Sound support groups to provide a calm and welcoming environment where they can focus on the care of their loved ones. Guests of the VA Puget Sound Fisher House have come from 48 states around the nation, and 14 countries around the globe. The VA Puget Sound Fisher House expands its footprint of service availability through VA Puget Sound specialty services, such as Spinal Cord Injury; helping those who come from a distance to feel at home.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- 8,400 families served
- 12,192 house guests
- 70,822 nights stayed
- Average length of stay is 11 nights
- More than \$12.1 million in hotel expense savings for Veterans, active duty, their families and caregivers



COVID-19 Response

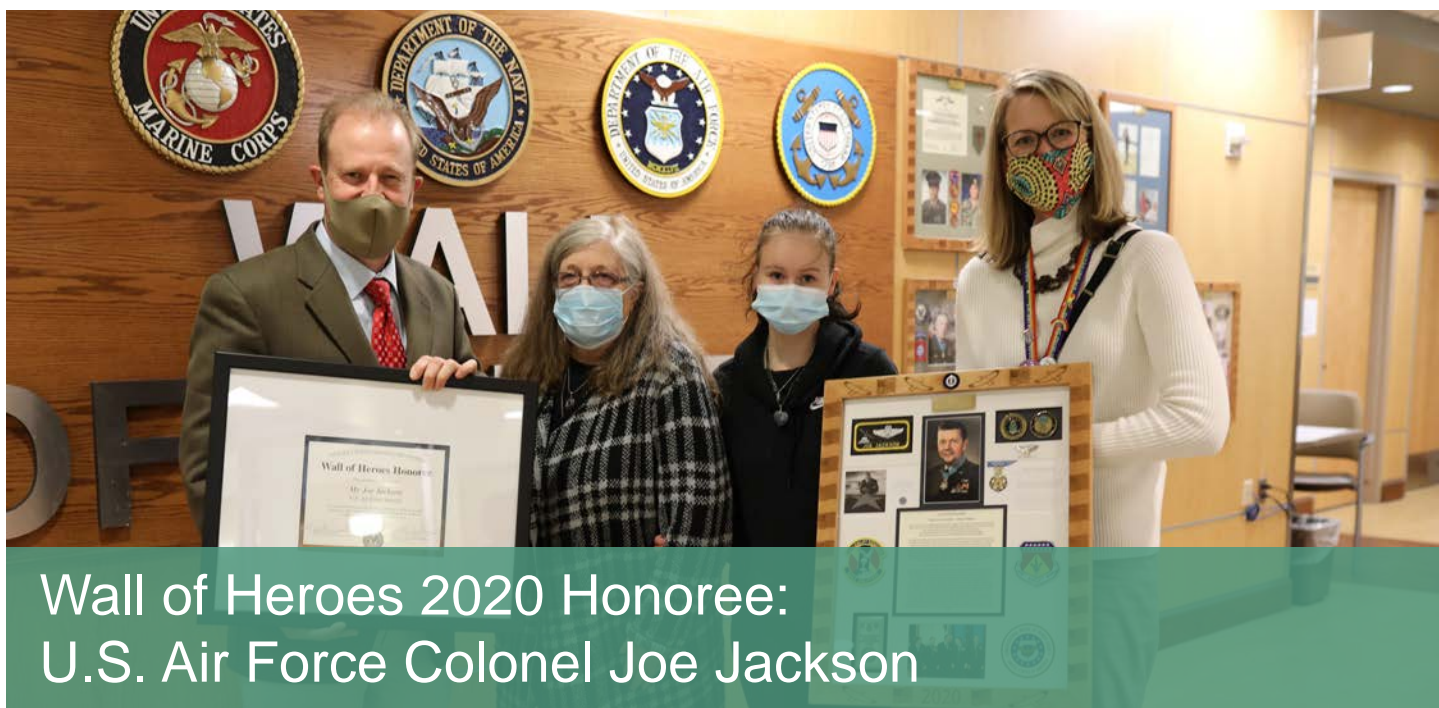
COVID-19 Emergency Operation Command maintained use of daily evaluation of risk, transmission, and prevention strategies, rapid COVID-19 testing (Veteran and employee). Additionally, the team maintained and improved access to care strategies, and shared resources on communication plans, infection prevention strategies, staffing and surge capacity analyses and recovery plans with its regional health care coalition.

VA Puget Sound's Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Team conducted more than 100,000 COVID-19 tests in Fiscal Year 2021.

VA Puget Sound continues to support The Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System (DEMPS) Program—the Veterans Health Administration's main program for deployment of clinical and non-clinical staff to an emergency or disaster, to include the pandemic. Our health care system personnel continued to support the nation by deploying medical, ancillary, and administrative personnel to areas in need. During the fiscal year, VA Puget Sound deployed nearly 30 personnel, through DEMPS in support of response efforts.

Bill & Melinda Gates Discovery Center, May 6, 2021: Enduring COVID-19 Communities Coming Together

“The biggest challenge we faced with COVID-19 was that it was new – and so there was no built-in foundational structure to draw from and respond to the pandemic,” Kathryn Volner, Occupational Health Nurse at VA (Veterans Affairs) Puget Sound Health Care System. “We worked with our infection prevention team, emergency department, and infectious disease specialists to create a well-rounded program to address employee concerns – because we believe that the more we care for our employees, the better we can care for our veterans.”



Wall of Heroes 2020 Honoree: U.S. Air Force Colonel Joe Jackson

Left to right: VA Puget Sound Executive Deputy Director Dr. Thomas Bundt, Col. Joe Jackson's Daughter Bonnie Jackson, Col. Joe Jackson's Granddaughter Lea Rose Jackson and VA Puget Sound Chief of Staff Dr. Catherine Kaminetzky recognize Col. Joe Jackson as the 2020 Wall of Heroes Honoree November 9, 2021. (Photo by Rafael Cruz)

"He loved it all," said Bonnie Jackson, daughter of U.S. Air Force Colonel Joe Jackson and VA Puget Sound Health Care System Wall of Heroes 2020 Honoree (posthumously), said when describing what her dad enjoyed most about his legendary military career spanning three wars (WWII, Korea and Vietnam). An auto mechanic by trade, Col. Jackson enlisted in the Army Air Corps in March 1941. Starting as a plane mechanic, he eventually moved to flying jets, was the second Air Force U-2 pilot and went on to fly C-123 aircraft. He flew more than 100 combat missions in Korea and almost 300 in Vietnam. The latter earned him the Medal of Honor for actions on May 12, 1968 for his part in the evacuation of Kham Duc while under fire. His medal was presented by President Lyndon B. Johnson at a White House Ceremony January 16, 1969.

His list of exemplary contributions is endless, with many accounts archived by the Library of Congress. Col. Jackson's daughter believes that her dad's involvement in the Cuban Missile Crisis was the thing he was most proud of. While his career is well-known and led to his selection as a Wall of Heroes Honoree, Bonnie was delighted to share some aspects about her dad that some may not know.

"Trivia or a bad dad joke was a requirement of each family meal," Bonnie shared with a warm smile. She recalled one of his favorites: "What president kept an alligator in the White House bathtub? President John Quincy Adams."

Kind, generous, humble, smart, and funny are among the many positive things that come to mind when people think of Col. Jackson, who spent every Monday for 25 years collecting food for the Kent food bank. He last read (Bonnie

shared he read it many times) the U.S. constitution front-to-back was when he was 93—just to ensure he could have educated debates with Bonnie and her brother, David. He completed both his undergraduate and master's degrees at night. And while he eventually bought his own plane, he began building an airplane in his basement in the 1970s (something Bonnie compared to the boat Gibbs in the TV show NCIS was building in his basement).

While the pandemic prevented a ceremony last year, Col. Jackson's Daughter Bonnie, Great Granddaughter, Lea Rose, and fellow Veteran Bill Crammatte joined VA Puget Sound's Deputy Executive Director Dr. Tom Bundt, Chief of Staff Dr. Catherine Kaminetzky, Wall of Heroes Chair Glen Boje and Wall of Heroes Ambassador (and frame designer) William Carpentier for an informal gathering in his honor November 9, 2021. Unable to attend, Col. Jackson's Wife Rosamond "Rose," who he was married to for 74 years.

Col. Jackson died January 12, 2019. "I miss him a lot," expressed Bonnie.

The Wall of Heroes serves as a reminder for patients, visitors, staff and volunteers at VA Puget Sound of the sacrifice, valor, bravery and heroism demonstrated by our Puget Sound Veterans. Our Wall of Heroes display, dedicated June 29, 2009, is one way we honor those Veterans. Framed biographic displays of each inductee are symbols honoring Veterans who have had significant contributions to those we serve at VA Puget Sound.

Each year, our Wall of Heroes Committee collects and reviews nominations, ultimately selecting one.



AWARD-WINNING STAFF

VHA David M. Worthen Award

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced on October 6 that VA Puget Sound Health Care System Section Chief for General Internal Medicine, Dr. Joyce E. Wipf received VA's highest honor for health professions education, the David M. Worthen Award. The David M. Worthen Awards for Excellence in Health Professions Education are sponsored by the VHA Office of Academic Affiliations.

In 2020, the VHA Worthen Awards were expanded to include three awards. The Rising Star Award recognizes an early career champion of health professions trainee education; the Innovator Award recognizes an individual who created and is sustaining or expanding a significant educational innovation; and the Career Achievement Award recognizes an outstanding health professions trainee education champion whose lifetime contributions have profoundly advanced and impacted the educational mission of VHA—which was awarded to Wipf.

Wipf received the 2020 Worthen Career Achievement Award recognizing her as an outstanding health professions trainee education champion whose lifetime contributions have profoundly advanced and impacted the educational mission of VHA.

"This year's awardees have made significant contributions to training the next generation of health professionals. Each of these recipients embody the characteristics of excellence

and visionary thinking that make VA a national leader in teaching and training future health care professionals," said VHA Chief of Academic Affiliations Marjorie A. Bowman.

Wipf received the Worthen Career Achievement Award for creating the novel curriculum "Resident as Teacher" course that has prepared second-year medical residents for their role as educators and leaders in numerous institutions across the country over the last 28 years. She is also recognized for her work in interprofessional training, spearheading the creation of Seattle's VHA Center of Excellence in Primary Care Education with the University of Washington Schools of Medicine and Nursing.

VAnTage Point, September 10, 2021: VA clinician, Army Veteran, a world leader in prostate cancer research

"Dr. Stephen Plymate, an Army Veteran, is an endocrinologist at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System in Seattle. He's a world leader in prostate cancer research. One of his studies became the highest-cited paper of 2019 in the high-impact Journal of Clinical Investigation."



VA Puget Sound Health Care System on the Road with Drive-Through COVID-19 Vaccines

VA Puget Sound Health Care System hit the road with drive-through COVID-19 vaccines as part of its Rural Health Initiative. The initial vaccine site at Little Creek Casino Resort over-flow parking lot in Shelton, Washington took place on March 4, 2021 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Using its Mobile Medical Unit (which was supporting COVID-19 testing at its Seattle campus during the pandemic), VA Puget Sound provided pre-scheduled first dose vaccinations to more than 100 eligible Veterans from that area.

As part VA Puget's Sound broader Rural Health Initiative, it took a modular approach to easily support more rural sites after the initial kick-off in Shelton. Along with its Mobile Medical Unit, it leveraged existing facilities in rural communities—such as VFWs—to set up physical vaccine clinics, and its Homeless Primary Care Team continued to focus on getting vaccines to home-based Veterans and to those who are homeless.

"Each vaccine brings hope, and we are committed to ensuring no Veteran is left behind," said VA Puget Sound Director Michael Tadych. "We continue to work with our equity and special populations teams to identify Veteran populations who may not be able to come in for their vaccines and to those who may be hesitant to get the vaccine."

VA Puget Sound receives American Heart Association /American Stroke Association's Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award

VA Puget Sound Health Care System earned the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's Get With The Guidelines® Target: Stroke Gold Plus and Target: Type 2 Diabetes Honor Roll quality achievement awards in September 2021. These awards recognize its commitment and success in implementing a high standard of stroke care by ensuring stroke patients receive the most appropriate treatment according to the latest nationally recognized, evidence-based guidelines based on the latest scientific evidence.

"We are pleased to recognize VA Puget Sound Health Care System for their commitment to stroke care," said Lee H. Schwamm, M.D., national chairperson of the Quality Oversight Committee and executive vice chair of Neurology, director of Acute Stroke Services, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts. "Research has shown that hospitals adhering to clinical measures through the Get With The Guidelines quality improvement initiative can often see fewer readmissions and lower mortality rates."

VA Puget Sound earned the Get With The Guidelines® Target: Stroke Gold Plus award by meeting specific quality measures developed to reduce the time between the patient's arrival at the hospital and treatment with the clot-buster tissue plasminogen activator (tPA). These evidence-based treatments aim at the goal of speeding recovery, reducing death and disability for stroke patients. Before discharge, patients also receive education on managing their health, and get a Neurology follow-up visit scheduled for secondary prevention of stroke.



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VA Puget Sound Expands Primary Care Footprint – Opens Three New Outpatient Clinics

VA Puget Sound Health Care System opened three new Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Fiscal Year 2021 as part of its ongoing primary care expansion plans to better serve Veterans. Physical openings included openings of clinics in Olympia in August, Edmonds in June, and Puyallup in July 2021. Virtual care was provided at each clinic beginning February 1, 2021.

Services at the new VA-operated outpatient clinics include primary care (in-clinic and home-based), laboratory services, behavioral health, social work, prosthetics/orthotics, clinical pharmacy specialists, telemedicine, and nutrition.

"I'm elated to celebrate the opening of the first VA clinic in Olympia, which will help veterans across our region get the excellent, timely care they deserve. Our country made a promise to take care of our nation's heroes when they come home, and the opening of this clinic will help us meet that promise for so many veterans in Olympia and across the South Sound," said Congresswoman Marilyn Strickland.

"I'm honored to be here to celebrate the opening of the newest VA clinic in our region (Puyallup). Those who have served and sacrificed for our nation deserve high quality, affordable, and accessible health care services," said Rep. Kim Schrier. "This new clinic will help reach many veterans in South King County, and I'm proud to have a CBOC in the 8th district."

The new clinics are part of VA Puget Sound's larger system redesign to better serve Western Washington. In addition to its three new clinics, VA Puget Sound is expected to open a new \$4.6 million, 26,000 sq. ft. clinic in Everett mid-2022. It is also exploring new clinics in the Auburn/Kent, North King County areas. Together, the new clinical footprint will allow VA Puget Sound to directly serve Everett and Olympia, two major metropolitan areas in Western Washington with no VA facilities currently. Additionally, it will create new capacity for areas of highest growth in South King and Pierce counties as well as provide better outreach to rural Veterans in North King County. While Bellevue residents

are currently being served by VA Puget Sound's Seattle Campus, it is actively planning for future clinics in Auburn and Woodinville.

VA Puget Sound has experienced a 60 percent growth in unique population in last 10 years while space essentially remained unchanged. To address the space constraints and better serve Veterans where they are geographically located, it continues with facility renovations and new construction projects across its catchment area—\$121 million Mental Health and Research Building in Seattle (March 2019); \$9.7 million, 15,000-square-foot Silverdale clinic (December 2019) that replaced its clinic in Bremerton; and \$4.3 million, 14,000 sq. ft. Community Resource and Referral Center in Georgetown (December 2019). Additionally, it continues renovations to its American Lake campus to support expanded primary care, while optimizing its specialty care programs and services.

VAntage Point, June 3, 2021: Amid shortage of face masks, researchers explore 3D options to guard against COVID-19, other infectious diseases

"Instead of relying strictly on purchasing off-the-shelf masks during a crisis situation, which everybody's trying to do, VA is working to create its own mask in order to build redundancy into the hospital supply chain," says a co-author of the study, Brian Strzelecki, a research engineer and 3D printing specialist at VA Puget Sound. "We're exploring a new concept of a reusable mask design that VA can potentially make for itself and that can act as a supplemental personal protective device when traditional models can't be acquired."

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Puget Sound Health Care System



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