



2021 Annual Report

Quality of Life through Health Care

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

WILKES-BARRE VA MEDICAL CENTER



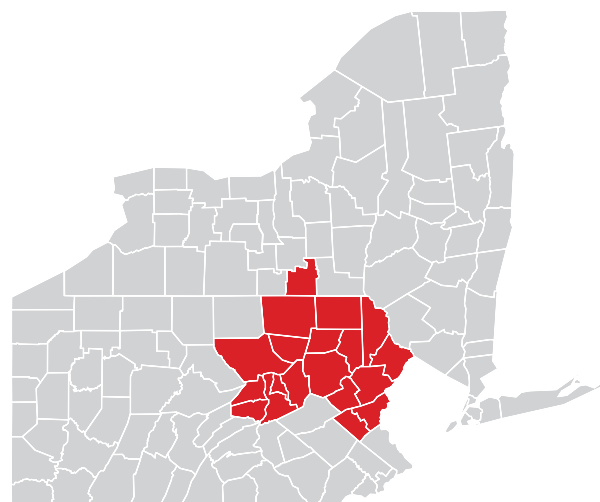
FACILITY OVERVIEW

The Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, is a complexity level 2 teaching hospital which provides a full range of patient care services. The medical center operates 58 hospital beds, 10 domiciliary beds, 16 ICU Beds and 105 Community Living Center (CLC) beds.

Comprehensive healthcare is provided through Primary Care, Medical and Surgical Specialty Care, and Mental Health Programming. Geriatrics and Extended Care services are also offered, including long term care, respite, rehabilitation, dementia care, hospice and palliative care, transitional care and a variety of home care services.

2021 Operating Budget

Total Operating Budget	\$417,695,000
Medical Services	\$239,429,000
Facilities	\$18,777,000
Administrative	\$17,062,000
NRM Projects	\$17,427,000
Care in the Community	\$125,000,000



Service Area

The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center is part of the VA Healthcare - VISN 4 Network along with eight other medical centers in Altoona, Butler, Coatesville, Erie, Lebanon, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Wilmington.

The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center primarily serves Veterans from 18 counties in Pennsylvania: Bradford, Susquehanna, Lycoming, Sullivan, Wyoming, Lackawanna, Wayne, Pike, Union, Montour, Columbia, Luzerne, Monroe, Carbon, Northumberland, Snyder, Northampton and Lehigh; and one county in New York: Tioga.



10 Domiciliary
Beds

58 Hospital
Beds

105 CLC Beds

16 ICU Beds

Unique Veterans/Visits

Facility	Unique Veterans	Visits
Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center	33,499	319,309
Allentown Community Based Outpatient Clinic	8,965	58,555
Columbia County Community Based Outpatient Clinic	1,483	5,214
Northampton County Community Based Outpatient Clinic	1,371	4,497
Sayre Community Based Outpatient Clinic	2,311	14,469
Tobyhanna Community Based Outpatient Clinic	629	2,368
Wayne County Community Based Outpatient Clinic	990	2,632
Williamsport Community Based Outpatient Clinic	3,682	19,961
Total	36,749	427,005

**As Veterans are often seen at more than one facility, site specific unique data contains redundancies. As a result, the sum of the site-specific data exceeds the actual number of Total Unique Veterans.

1,475
Employees

264
Veterans

113
Physicians

432
Nurses

173
Operating Beds

10
Substance Abuse
Residential
Rehabilitation

30
Inpatient Care

4
Surgical

105
Community
Living Center

24
Inpatient
Mental Health

16
ICU



A Message From

THE DIRECTOR



One big advantage of Telehealth is that our Veterans can see and interact with their Providers in real time. Immediate care can be provided without the potential spread of infection from person to person.



Change, both positive and negative, is part of life.

How each of us reacts to change defines how we live and work. When the pandemic restricted some of our normal operations, the VA had to change and find ways to continue to provide high-quality healthcare to our Veterans.

Our ability to expand our virtual and digital communications with our Veterans has positively changed the way we deliver health care. Our VA Telehealth appointments increased by over 350% in 2021. It was a big adjustment at first for Veterans as well as our staff, but the benefits far outweighed the detriments. One big advantage of Telehealth is that our Veterans can see and interact with their providers in real time. Immediate care can be provided without the potential spread of infection from person to person. Telehealth also allowed us to supply high-quality healthcare to Veterans living in the more rural communities of our catchment area.

Veterans who experience stress and anxiety waiting for non-critical onsite appointments find that virtual at home appointments have become a convenient alternative.

Positive change also occurred in the way we exchange patient clinical health history. Pre-pandemic studies show that only 6% of patients had their health history available at the point of care. Today, the VA and our Community Care Partners effectively exchange health history data in a quicker, more efficient manner.

Looking forward, the positive changes the Wilkes-Barre VA has made in our delivery of care have enabled us to maintain our commitment to supplying high-quality services throughout the pandemic. Our expansion of Health Records Sharing has made treatment more precise and care more convenient for the Veterans we serve.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Russ. E Lloyd".

Russell E Lloyd, Director



Set to Open in the Spring of 2023

PARKING GARAGE PROJECT UNDERWAY



When complete, many of the past parking challenges will be solved.

If you have been to the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center in recent years you know that parking at the medical center can sometimes be a challenge. To permanently alleviate this problem the Wilkes-Barre VA has broken ground on a new parking garage that is set to open in the spring of 2023.

When finished, the parking garage exit will lead Veterans into the north entrance of the Medical Center by the pharmacy and next to the newly opened Canteen and Retail Store.

The parking garage project will initially take out 220 current parking spots during the construction phase. To help alleviate the temporary loss of parking, the VA has cleared and is building up the land beyond lot B on the northside of the hospital to add enough parking to balance out the loss due to construction.

When completed, many of the past parking challenges will be solved. Here are some artist renderings of the parking garage project.



All artist renderings/pictures shown are for illustration purposes only. They are not meant to be an exact rendition. As the project evolves it is subject to change without notice.



THE WILKES-BARRE VA DENTAL CLINIC

Changing Lives with New 3D CT Unit



The Wilkes-Barre VA Dental Clinic continues to provide our Veterans with the highest level of services.

In addition to being ranked #1 in productivity and efficiency of all the VA Dental Clinics, the facility has just made operational, a new state-of-the-art 3D Cone Beam CT Unit.

To aid our VA Dental Staff, this unit can take 3D CT scans of the jaw, sinuses, middle and inner ear, and the floor of the skull. It also imparts low radiation compared to a regular CT Scanner.

This 3D Cone Beam CT Unit can be positioned so that scans can be taken on wheelchair bound patients right in their chair.

Since this unit can take 3D pictures from the top of the head to the lower neck area, it can provide three-dimensional live images of the whole skull.



Dr Saini, a retired Army Colonel, is one of only two Oral Maxillofacial Radiologists in the whole VA system. We are very fortunate to have Dr Saini on staff right here in Wilkes-Barre. Dr Saini also provides consultation on images sent to him from other VA Medical Facilities.

The image quality is so good that the Doctors can see the very early signs of bone destruction from an infection.

Since this unit can take 3D pictures from the top of the head to the lower neck area, it can provide three-dimensional live images of the whole skull. You're able to see nice images of the pharyngeal space, sinuses, and the middle and inner ear structures. If there are any abnormal findings in the acquired images, our clinic will be able to share them with the Radiology Department for further evaluation.

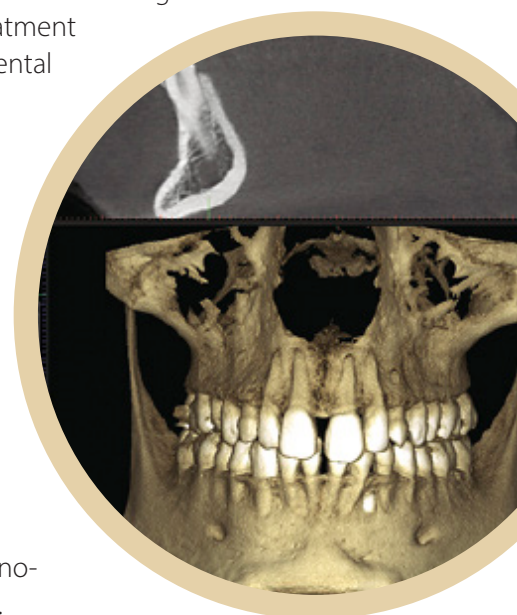
The 3D scan can also pick up calcification of the carotid and vertebral arteries in the neck leading to the brain. If there's any calcification throughout the whole pathway will be able to recognize and share those images as well.

With this modality, we can see inside the tooth where the vessels and nerves traverse the roots. The 3D images can show exact measurements to facilitate precise placement of dental implants within the anatomical boundaries. If a patient has any deviation from a healthy normal mouth or impacted or misplaced teeth or early stages of malignancy, we will be able to visualize it in the acquired 3D imaging.

Dr. Tarnjit Saini
Oral Maxillofacial Radiologist,
Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center

In the future, Dr Saini can see this unit being utilized for designing and treatment planning for all our Veteran dental patients.

The new 3D CT scanner is becoming a valuable tool for our Dental Clinic. Dr Saini's expertise with this unit has allowed our Dental Clinic to not only precisely place dental implants, but it has also been able to detect many incidental irregularities in the head and neck area, that otherwise may have gone unnoticed, and that may save a life.



Wilkes-Barre VA Chaplain Spreading

POSITIVITY WITH SNACK CART TREATS

With so many changes the past two years prompted by the COVID virus, it's only natural that we feel some negative uncertainty as we navigate through our day.

Recognizing the uneasiness some people were having, Khoa Nguyen, Chief of Chaplain Service, decided to combat the uneasiness people were having with engaging in conversations over water and snacks from his magic cart, also known as "The Mission Express".

It is magical because it has facilitated many conversations with Veterans, their loved ones, and co-workers who may be in need of some positive reassurance that the pandemic has sometimes soured. The treats act as an icebreaker and leave the recipient feeling good about the interaction.

When Khoa first walked into the SPU waiting room with no snacks and introduced himself as the Chaplain, you could have heard a pin drop. A quick smile was all he got. Now when he walks in with the 'Mission Express' and tells them that he is the chaplain, it's a different reaction. Khoa often states that he had always wanted to be a flight attendant but missed his calling, so he's here to practice just in case things didn't work out. You now hear laughter and the conversations beginning. One woman told him about her beloved chickens and the sweaters she knitted for them. Another told him about her daughter who passed away very recently of COVID and the brokenness she is left feeling. The healing continues as he delivers these snacks to our employees as well

(don't worry, he spends his own money). It's amazing what snacks can do. It's a way for Khoa to meet people and provide chaplain service to them in whatever way he can. It is indeed what chaplaincy in the marketplace is all about!

It is important for us to recognize that providing care during the pandemic can lead to stress, anxiety, fear, and other strong emotions. Our health care workers have struggled with high workloads, longer and overtime shifts and not getting adequate rest and recovery. Coping with these emotions and taking steps to build their resilience to these emotions can help them avoid burnout.

Giving Veterans, their families, and co-workers an outlet to speak openly about how the pandemic is affecting them is a positive by-product of what the "Mission Express" brings. If these emotions become overwhelming, the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center has the mental health and counseling resources to help.

My interactions have in many ways been therapeutic. It gives people a chance to express what they are going through with a receptive listener. It's nice to be able to give them some encouragement and spiritual guidance as well as a tasty treat.

*Khoa Nguyen, Chief of Chaplain Service
at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center*



Wilkes-Barre VA Opens NEW CANTEEN & RETAIL STORE

Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center Director Russell Lloyd and Canteen Chief, George Moore cut the grand opening ribbon for the new canteen and retail store.



Back over eight years ago, when the VA needed to upgrade and build a new Emergency Department, the Canteen was relocated into Liberty Hall on the second floor.

Although the space was considered sufficient for basic canteen and retail store needs, it was always considered a temporary home until a more permanent space was available. That permanent space became a reality on December 6th when the new VA Canteen and Retail Store softly opened on the ground level and first floor, near the pharmacy.

The Canteen's new cafeteria area is 1800 sq. feet that features a walk-in cooler, three separate hot food stations and a new reach in freezer. With the expanded space, they can provide more choices. More fresh products and less prepackaged foods.

Our breakfast menu now features more expanded options like grilled cheese, made to order eggs, omelets, turkey sausage, and oatmeal made fresh every day. For lunch both grilled and spicy chicken, hand crafted burgers, and rotating daily options like fried chicken, tacos, and pizza. In the spring, they also plan to offer line space to local food truck vendors.

In the coming months, healthier food choices will be added. The Canteen currently has a fresh vegetable on the line every day, without any oils or seasonings. They also started offering salmon burgers and whole wheat buns as well.

The Veterans and the staff should love the new canteen, the ambiance is so much better. There's a fireplace in the food court, stone on the walls, tile throughout, and when the weather gets warmer, an outdoor seating area.

The first floor features a much larger retail space. With a larger sales area, the store can carry more clothing, shoes, housewares, and snacks. The store will also continue to sell pre-packaged grab and go salads, subs, and sandwiches.

"I would like to thank everybody from plan and design to the people who helped us move," said Moore. "It was a quick turnaround. Thanks to all parties involved from the Director's Office to Mr. Sharon, it was an overall team effort to get it done. A big 'Thank You' also goes out to our Nutrition and Food Service for putting up with us for so long."

Although it took some time to procure a permanent home, the new Canteen is a nice gathering place for both the Veterans and employees. It offers more choices and an expanded ultra-modern seating area that will provide a comfortable setting for years to come.

In the old space, we just didn't have enough room. Our retail space limited the number of items we could carry, and we did not have a prep kitchen.

We are very thankful that were able to use the hospital cafeteria to cook our hot foods, but anything we prepared had to be transported up two floors to Liberty Hall.

George Moore, Canteen Chief



WILKES-BARRE VA'S HEART CATHETERIZATION LAB

One of the Best in the Region

When it comes to the heart, Veterans are in good hands at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center.

The Director of the Wilkes-Barre's Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory, Dr Samir Pancholy, is very proud of what the VA offers, a very experienced team and state-of-the-art equipment.

Wilkes-Barre's Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory is equipped with a newly upgraded GE x-ray system and hemodynamic monitoring system. The lab is now enhanced with a specialized intravascular (inside the coronary) ultrasound systems that features co-registration which measures directly onto the Cath Image

(angiogram) and provides advanced guidance to help precisely locate the area of concern. The Wilkes-Barre VA is one of the only Labs throughout this region with advanced co-registration imaging.

When coronary stenting is needed, the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical can utilize the Corindus PCI Robot which enables the cardiologist to make movements with millimeter precision. Studies have shown that the PCI robot decreases the number of stents needed to treat a blockage. It also reduces the amount of radiation that the Veteran and the

cardiologist receive and is also the most commonly used in radial artery access (through the wrist) in our Cath Lab. Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center is the only cardiac Cath Lab in the VA's VISN 4 network with this innovative technology.

"The PCI Robot that we utilize here is usually only found in larger cities, we are very fortunate to be able to offer this advanced technology here at Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center," said Dr. Pancholy.

Doctor Pancholy would like Veterans to know that besides a great deal of procedural experience and advanced technological equipment, the Wilkes-Barre VA Cath Lab is poised to handle any emergency; Veterans can feel confident in our care. The entire cardiology and Cardiac Cath Lab team at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center is honored to serve our Veterans with state-of-the-art modalities and expertise.

We have one of the more experienced staff in the region. Each of our cardiologists have over twenty-five years of experience performing coronary procedures, and our Nurse Manager and Lead Technologist also have over twenty years of Cath Lab experience.

Dr. Samir Pancholy
Director of the Wilkes-Barre's Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory





MEMORABILIA AREA

Features New Displays

If you get a chance to visit the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, whether as a patient or guest, you will find some interesting new displays on the 1st floor.

Coming into the hospital these days usually means you have a doctor's appointment, prescription pickup, health testing or all the aforementioned. Many Veterans try to schedule all their stops the same day and may have some downtime in between appointments. If you find yourself with the time, head over to the 1st floor Memorabilia Area and connected hallway to check out our new additions.

One thing that is hard to miss is the sprawling Civil war display at the entrance to the memorabilia area. The display depicts the third and final day of the Battle of Gettysburg – Pickett's Charge, which was the tipping point of the Civil War.

This 1/72 Scale display model was the creation of many Community Living Center (CLC) Residents and Wilkes-Barre VA Recreation Therapy Assistant William Roberts. The inspiration to make the Civil

I'm sort of a Civil War nut, so I had a large allotment of soldiers already painted that I didn't know exactly what to do with. This became the starting point for the Pickett's Charge display.

William T. Roberts
Therapy Assistant - Wilkes-Barre VA

War display came from two separate trips CLC Residents made to the Gettysburg battle fields.

The project started over six years ago with battlefield woodworking being done by CLC Veterans and field parts being made by others. One of the goals was to create realistic terrain and elevation changes that mimic the actual battlefield to demonstrate what the soldiers were experiencing. In researching Pickett's Charge, the Union Soldiers were outmanned but occupied the higher ground. Confederate Brigadier General George E. Pickett was ordered by General Robert E. Lee, to rush the center of the Union position through a mile of unprotected farmland and over Emmitsburg Road, which was protected by two fences. As the Confederate Army led the charge, they became easy targets for the Union Soldiers mounted on higher ground (this moment is clearly depicted in the display). This daring strategy ultimately proves a disastrous sacrifice for the Confederates, with casualties approaching 60 percent. Repulsed by close-range Union rifle and artillery fire, the Confederates retreat.

The building of the Pickett's Charge display allowed our CLC Residents to participate as a form of therapy as well as raise the visibility of their creative talents. Job well done.

The display turned out to be much bigger than we planned. Every one of the over 600 soldiers were hand painted by me and another Veteran. Trees where built, Emmitsburg Road fence was erected, and cotton was used to depict the cannon fire smoke.

William T. Roberts
Therapy Assistant - Wilkes-Barre VA

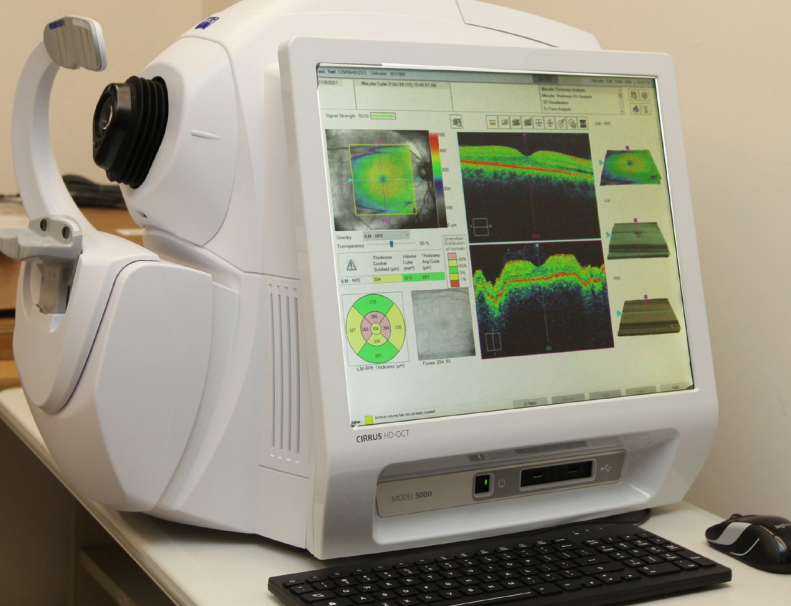
In addition to the Pickett's Charge display, the VA installed a series of military uniform shadow boxes in the connecting hallway coming from the Memorabilia Area towards the Dental Clinic. This collection is composed of Uniforms that were donated to the Medical Center by area soldiers.

"Veterans and guests can get a first-hand look at the uniforms of the various eras," said Ron Skamanich, volunteer curator, "it's a really nice addition to the Medical Center."

**OVER 6
YEARS**

ago the project started
with battlefield
woodworking being
done by CLC Veteran





Over the past 15-20 years eye care services at the Wilkes-Barre VA have changed dramatically with more technologically advanced equipment that many times the individual offices on the outside cannot afford.

Dr. Bruce Brownstein
Chief of Eyecare Services, Wilkes-Barre VA



Wilkes-Barre VA Eyecare Using the **LATEST TECHNOLOGY TO HELP VETERANS SEE**

The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center has been offering our Veterans great eye care services since the beginning.

What Veterans may not know is that we have one of the most experienced eye care staff in the region and bolster some of the industry's most state-of-the-art eye care equipment.

The Eye Clinic is made up of Optometrists and Ophthalmologists offering a full range of eye care services which include routine eye care and screening exams, specialty exams for cataracts, glaucoma, plastic surgery and retinal services. We also offer Telehealth Services where we can check for diabetic retinopathy both remotely and at any of our remote Community Based Outpatient Clinics.

The medical center also features off-site specialists who come in and provide additional services for cornea and external diseases of the eye.

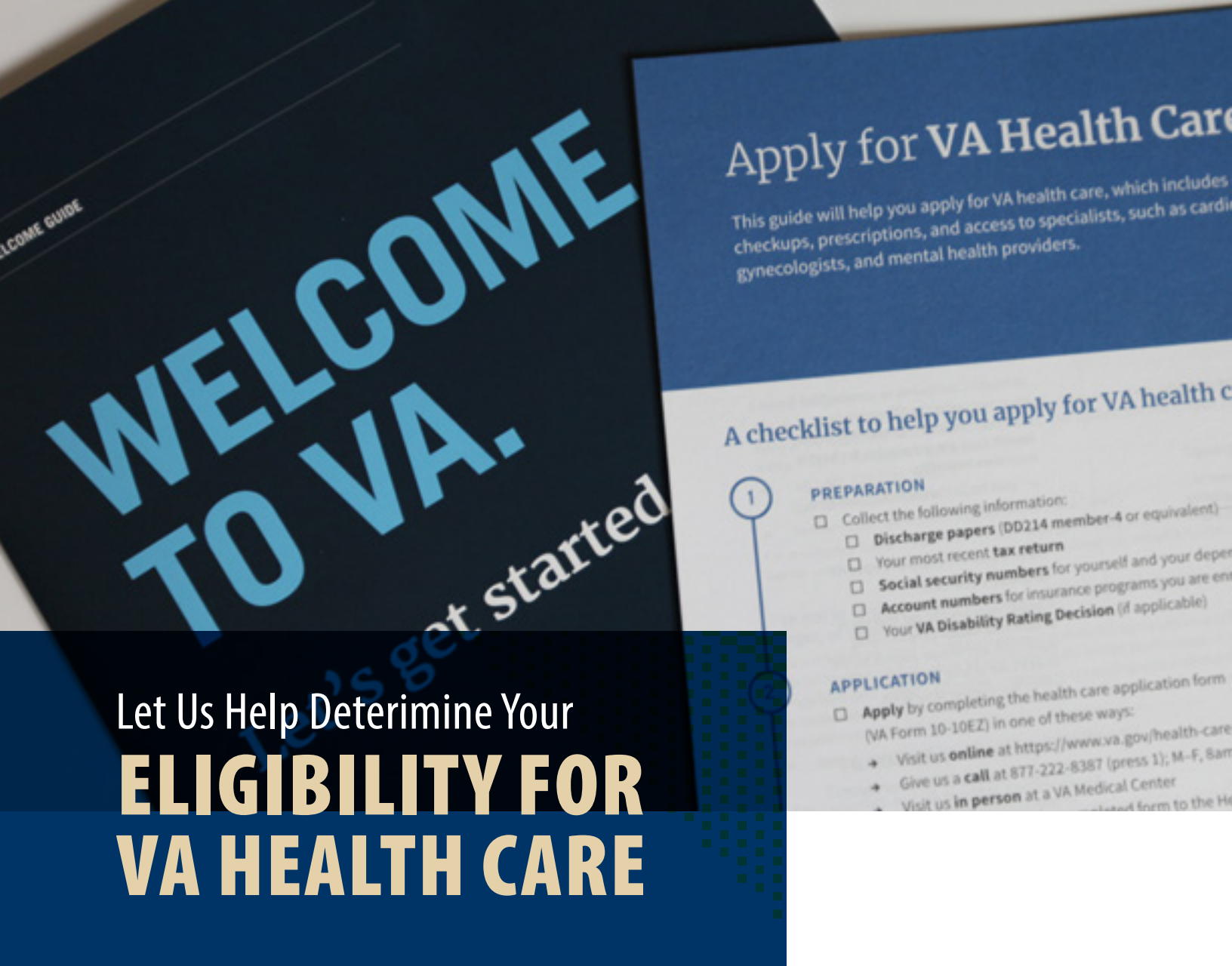
Cataract surgeries are routinely performed here at the medical center and when there is a need for a corneal transplant or a glaucoma procedure, we have specialists come in to perform those operations.

The Wilkes-Barre VA's technologically advanced equipment includes a unit that basically performs automatic refractions, which makes it quicker and easier to complete glass fittings. Another advanced piece of equipment takes photographs of the retinal surfaces, and supplies measurements down to microns (portions of millimeters), so that our Doctors can better evaluate and treat retinal disorders and other diseases.

The Wilkes-Barre VA Eye Clinic continues to provide advanced expertise and latest technology to ensure that our Veterans are getting the best eye care possible. We hope you can SEE the difference.



Nidek Auto Refractor - Performs automatic refractions, which makes it quicker and easier to complete glass fittings.



Let Us Help Determine Your **ELIGIBILITY FOR VA HEALTH CARE**

The VA currently serves around 9 million Veterans. At the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, we have a variety of health care services to meet your needs.

If you're a Veteran who has never applied for VA health-care or if you have previously been determined ineligible but have experienced a significant change in earning potential or health, give us a call or shoot us a message and let us help determine your eligibility for health care services.

The Wilkes-Barre VA serves Veterans from 18 counties in Pennsylvania and one county in New York state through our main Medical Center in Wilkes-Barre and seven Community Based Outpatient Clinics.



CALL 570-824-3521

When prompted select option 4

EMAIL

WilkesBarreEligibilityGroup@VA.gov.

A Veteran may still be eligible for VA Health Care even if they have private insurance.



LOCATIONS

Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center

1111 East End Blvd.
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711
570-824-3521 / 877-928-2621

Allentown Community Based Outpatient Clinic

3110 Hamilton Blvd.
Allentown, PA 18103
610-599-0127

Northampton County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

701 Slate Belt Blvd.
Bangor, PA 18013-9341
610-599-0127

Columbia County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

225 Columbia Mall Drive
Bloomsburg, PA 17815
570-316-4116

Sayre Community Based Outpatient Clinic

1537 Elmira Street
Sayre, PA 18840
570-888-6803

Tobyhanna Community Based Outpatient Clinic


Tobyhanna Army Depot
Building 220
Tobyhanna, PA 18466
570-615-8341

Wayne County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

600 Maple Avenue
Honesdale, PA 18431
570-251-6543

Williamsport Community Based Outpatient Clinic

1705 Warren Avenue
3rd Floor Suite 304
Williamsport, PA 17701
570-322-4791

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