



VA ANN ARBOR HEALTHCARE SYSTEM **2020 ANNUAL REPORT**



WELCOME

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It's been a tough year for everyone; you can't sugar-coat it. But I would maintain that each of us still have so many wonderful things in our lives where there is plenty of room for gratitude. We can be grateful for each other, working through this pandemic, shoulder-to-shoulder, through ups and downs to keep our Veterans and our co-workers as safe as possible. We can show gratitude for the nearly 70,000 Veterans who are in our care each year and the sacrifices they made on our behalf so we can enjoy the freedoms that being an American affords us. Many of us have lost loved ones this year, but we can still be thankful for the many others who are still with us and who fill our lives with happiness and joy.

Throughout the pandemic, our teams have been working to make sure our healthcare system sustained preparedness in an unpredictable situation. We maintained enough resources, including PPE, and we invested in hiring an unprecedented number of new staff. We activated our Fourth Mission for the first time in our 67-year history, admitting 36 non-Veteran patients to help alleviate the pressure on area private sector facilities. In total, VAAHS cared for 227 COVID-19 patients through the year.

By the end of 2020, we began efforts to vaccinate our Veterans and staff. Safety continues to be the top priority

in our vaccine distribution plan, which is based on scientific and historical vaccination data, as well as past pandemic vaccine plans. The processes for delivering the vaccines have gone smoothly, thanks to the marvelous nursing staff working to ensure an organized and friendly distribution. And thanks to all the administrative staff who worked to plan the process and work through every contingency based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the Scarce Resource Allocation Team (SRAT). They've really done some great work.

Our strength is tempered by the diversity of our staff; all in service of the Veteran Community. No matter our role in the Healthcare System, we have all dedicated ourselves to this mission of service-above-self. That same desire that inspired our Veterans to serve in the armed forces, inspires each of us.

As we embark on a new year with two vaccines and more on the way, a fitting quote comes to mind from Jonas Salk, who developed the first successful polio vaccine. He said, "Hope lies in dreams, in imagination, and in the courage of those who dare to make dreams into reality." I believe the realities of this year will be vastly different from what we experienced last year. That is my hope for the new year.



Dr. Creasman
with VISN Director
RimaAnn Nelson
and Secretary of Veterans
Affairs, Robert Wilke
during his visit to
Ann Arbor July 2020



STATISTICS

VAAAHS BY THE NUMBERS

\$646 million

Total Operating Budget

\$40 million

Medical Support and Compliance

\$468 million

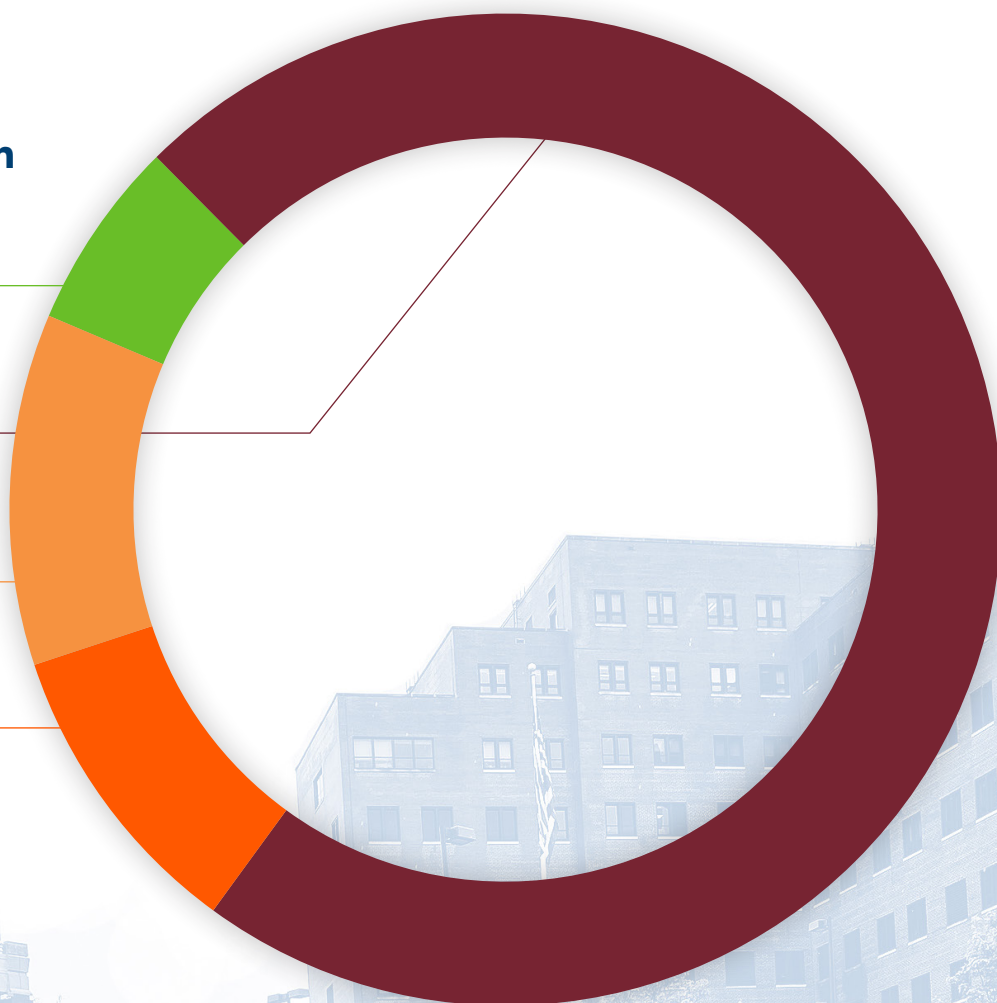
Medical Services

\$74 million

Medical Facilities

\$64 million

Community Care



102

Acute Care Beds

40

Community Living
Center Beds

66,641

Veterans Enrolled
in VA Care

554,376

Outpatient Visits

4,862

Hospital Admissions

6.0 days

Average Length of Stay

VA RESEARCH

DR. JEFFREY CURTIS RECEIVES 2019 BARNWELL AWARD

VA researcher Dr. Jeffrey L. Curtis has received the 2019 John B. Barnwell Award. It is VA Clinical Science Research and Development's highest honor, given for scientific contributions that change clinical practice for Veterans.

Curtis is a pulmonologist and critical care physician at the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System in Michigan. He is also a professor at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He is internationally recognized as a leading researcher in the field of pulmonary disease.

"Dr. Curtis is a dedicated VA physician scientist with over 30 years' service.

He has made many fundamental contributions to our understanding of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and lung defense from bacterial pathogens," said Dr. Rachel Ramoni, VA's chief research and development officer. "In addition, by demonstrating outstanding strengths in mentoring early-career scientists, he has fostered the next generation of VA investigators."

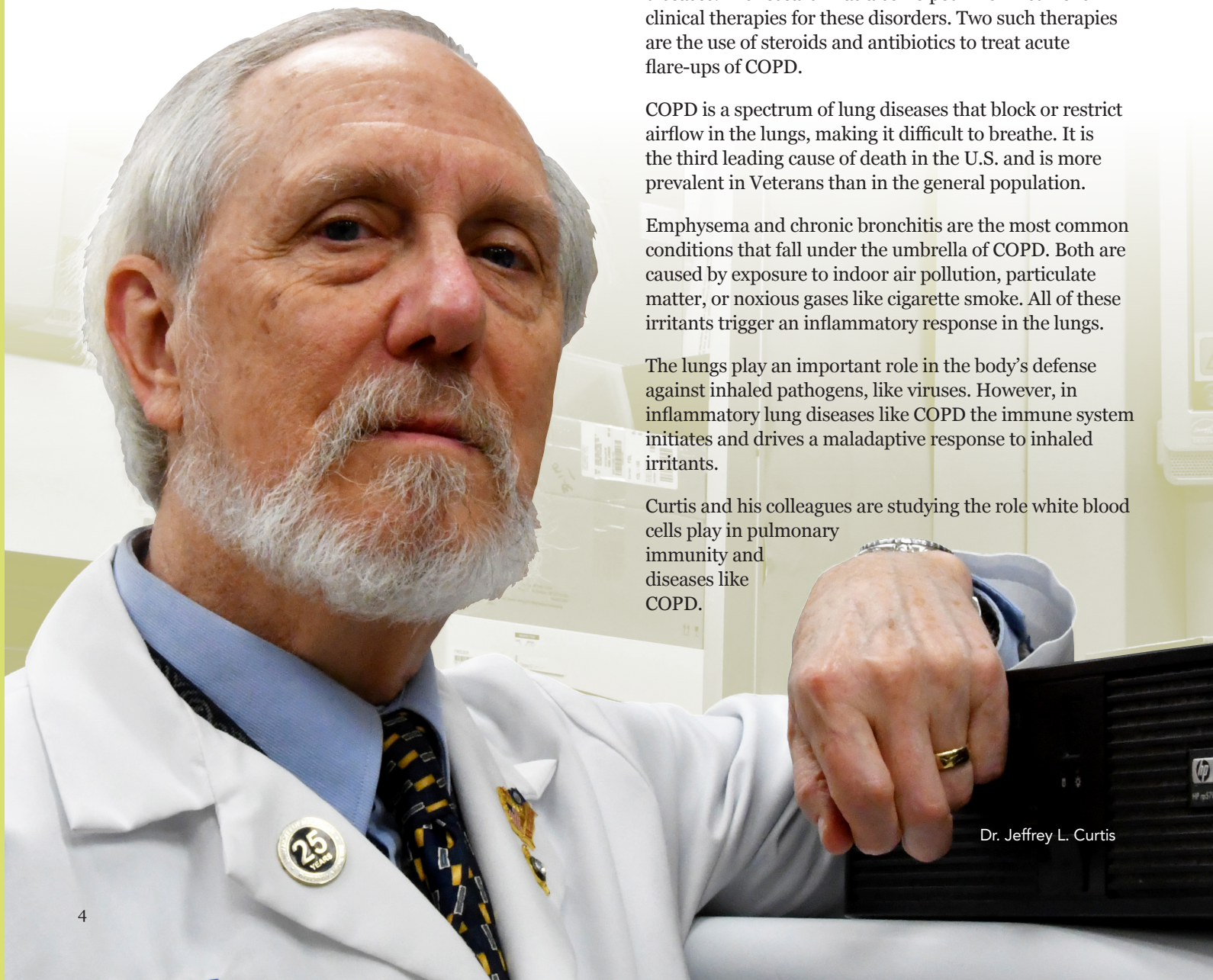
Curtis has made many significant contributions to science's understanding of the basic mechanisms underlying COPD, asthma, and lung infection. His early work identified the role the immune system plays in COPD and other lung diseases. His research has also helped inform current clinical therapies for these disorders. Two such therapies are the use of steroids and antibiotics to treat acute flare-ups of COPD.

COPD is a spectrum of lung diseases that block or restrict airflow in the lungs, making it difficult to breathe. It is the third leading cause of death in the U.S. and is more prevalent in Veterans than in the general population.

Emphysema and chronic bronchitis are the most common conditions that fall under the umbrella of COPD. Both are caused by exposure to indoor air pollution, particulate matter, or noxious gases like cigarette smoke. All of these irritants trigger an inflammatory response in the lungs.

The lungs play an important role in the body's defense against inhaled pathogens, like viruses. However, in inflammatory lung diseases like COPD the immune system initiates and drives a maladaptive response to inhaled irritants.

Curtis and his colleagues are studying the role white blood cells play in pulmonary immunity and diseases like COPD.



Dr. Jeffrey L. Curtis

NEW \$6.2M INTENSIVE CARE UNIT AND TELE-ICU TECHNOLOGY

They are also studying the mechanisms responsible for clearance of dead cellular material in the lungs. In healthy people, unneeded cells die naturally through a process called apoptosis. Specialized cells called macrophages are programmed to clear away most dead cells.

In chronic lung diseases like COPD, the lungs are burdened with dead cells that are not properly cleared away by the body. In some cases, this can cause an autoimmune response.

Curtis is past chair of the American Thoracic Scientific Assembly on Allergy, Immunology and Inflammation. In 2019, he was granted a scientific accomplishment award by the AII assembly.

The Barnwell Award is given each year to a VA investigator whose scientific contributions have changed clinical approaches to Veterans' health. The award is named after Dr. John Blair Barnwell, a highly regarded clinician, scientist, and educator who served at the VA in Ann Arbor, Michigan in the post-World War II era.

Curtis has been a leader in a number of major clinical trials and programs to advance the study of COPD and other lung disorders, including:

A VA cooperative trial that demonstrated the efficacy of steroids for acute flare-ups of COPD.

The Michigan Lung Volume Reduction Surgery program, which validated surgical lung reduction as a treatment for advanced COPD.

The Lung Tissue Research Consortium (LTRC), which studies lung tissue samples from people with and without lung diseases.

The COPD Genetic Epidemiology study (COPDGene), which identified genetic factors associated with COPD.

SPIROMICS, an ongoing cohort study to identify novel biomarkers of COPD progression.

The Early COPD Cohort, which is about to start recruiting to determine the earliest changes that cause some smokers to develop disease.

The COPD Clinical Research Network (CCRN), which established that the frequency of COPD exacerbations can be reduced by scheduled use of the antibiotic azithromycin, but not by statins or beta-blockers.



VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System is pleased to announce the opening of its new \$6.2M high-tech intensive care unit at the medical center on Fuller Road in Ann Arbor.

Measuring 10,000 square feet, the new 12-bed ICU provides increased capacity for Veteran-patients, equipment, and visitors. The experience for patients is improved with large windows, beautiful individual showers and a design that allows for a better workflow for providers, nurses, and staff.

"We are extremely proud to active our new intensive care unit," said Dr. Mark S. Hausman, Chief of Staff. "This space is built to support Veterans throughout our region who have critical illness or need intensive care services. The design for this unit was accomplished by a terrific collaboration of nurses, doctors, therapists, engineers and architects. Every aspect of this space is meant to create the best possible experience for Veterans and their family members."

VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System has clinics in Flint, Jackson, and Toledo, Ohio and serves more than 66,000 veterans in the Southeast Michigan-Northwest Ohio region.



Executive Leadership and ICU staff gather for the ribbon cutting of the new high-tech intensive care unit.

12

Beds

PANDEMIC

COVID-19 RESPONSE

In a historic move, VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System began accepting non-Veteran patient transfers from strained area hospitals on Sunday April 5, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The healthcare system enacted their “Fourth Mission,” a first in its 67-year history, calling for humanitarian care for non-Veteran patients during an emergency. The VA’s “Fourth Mission” is part of the Nation’s preparedness for responses to national emergencies and to support local critical needs to non-Veterans in times of crisis.

VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System had been in COVID-19 preparations for months, by increasing their hospital capacity, reallocating resources and personnel, and converting inpatient and intensive care units to accept patients who contracted the disease.

In addition to increasing resources such as beds and equipment, the hospital identified existing staff members with ICU experience and reassigned them to support the fight against COVID-19.

Stacey Breedveld, VAAHS Associate Director for Patient Care Services, said the nursing staff faced new challenges while caring for critically ill patients on ventilators. She explained how usually in an end-of-life situation, patients would have the support of family members near them. However, with visitors not being allowed to see patients anymore, nurses have stepped up to support patients.

“In many cases, it was the nurse, you know, holding the patient’s hand as they passed,” Breedveld said. “They’ve just gone above and beyond their duty.”

By the end of 2020, VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System cared for 227 COVID-19 patients and 36 non-Veterans under the VA’s Fourth Mission.

2020 COVID-19
Patients cared for:

227
Veterans

36 non-Veterans
under the VA’s Fourth Mission





ANN ARBOR VA HOSPITAL TO BE RENAMED AFTER LOCAL MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT



Last year, U.S. Senators Gary Peters (MI) and Debbie Stabenow (MI) and U.S. Representative Debbie Dingell (MI-12) introduced legislation in both chambers of Congress to rename the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) in Ann Arbor after Lieutenant Colonel Charles S. Kettles.

Lieutenant Colonel Kettles, a lifelong resident of Ypsilanti who passed away in January of 2019, served in the Vietnam War as an Army helicopter commander and was awarded the Medal of Honor in 2016 for leading a rescue operation that saved 44 soldiers.

"We knew LTC Kettles very well here at the medical center," said VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System Director, Dr. Ginny L. Creasman. "He stood for the values that we cherish at VA Ann Arbor. It is truly our honor to have his name on the hospital. He will remind us every day to live up to the standards we've promised to our Veterans and to the people of our healthcare delivery system."

In May of 1967, Lieutenant Colonel Kettles led three rescue flights into enemy territory to deliver supplies, reinforcements and to evacuate wounded airborne soldiers who had been ambushed by Northern Vietnamese forces. After Kettles was informed during the middle of his final flight that eight soldiers remained on the ground, he immediately returned without any support to rescue the remaining men. All told, his actions saved the lives of 40 soldiers and 4 crewmembers from the 176th Aviation Company.



AWARDS

NATIONAL CHALLENGE WINNERS

For the second year in a row, the VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Toledo, Ohio was recognized by The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as one of the winners of the 2020 Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Community Partnership Challenge, which recognizes VA facility partnerships with local community organizations that help Veterans and their families lead happier healthier lives.

The annual challenge spotlights successful partnerships between VA medical facilities and nongovernmental organizations and brings attention to the collaborative efforts taking place in local communities that serve Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors.

VA Ann Arbor Medical Center and VA Toledo Community Based Outpatient Clinic have a partnership with the Toledo Bar Association which helps Veterans with noncriminal legal issues such as employment discrimination, landlord-tenant issues and bankruptcy which takes place at free monthly walk-in clinics.

"I'm so proud of the team in Toledo for winning this award for the second year," said Dr. Ginny Creasman, Director/CEO of VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System. "We've shown that caring for our Veterans' social challenges is the cornerstone of caring for their health care needs. It's hard to think about your health when you have overwhelming socioeconomic concerns. We have dozens of programs such as this one, that contribute directly to the health and well-being of our Veteran population."

More than 45 facilities applied to the 2020 VHA Community Partnership Challenge. This year's theme was "social determinants of health". VA medical facilities were encouraged to submit entries that demonstrate how their partnerships are helping Veterans lead healthier happier lives by increasing their access to education, employment, food security, housing, spiritual support and transportation.



Michelle Tussing, JD, MSW

Leslie Witherell, MSW, LISW-S

Dr. Ginny Creasman

MILESTONE

VAAHS OPENS THE FIRST FISHER HOUSE IN MICHIGAN

The VA Ann Arbor Fisher House is the first Fisher House to be built in the state of Michigan and opened on June 1, 2020.

There are currently 91 Fisher Houses located in the U.S., Germany, and the United Kingdom. The VA Ann Arbor Fisher House is a beautiful “home away from home” that will provide high quality, temporary lodging to families and caregivers of Veterans and active duty Servicemembers who are undergoing an episode of care at the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System (VAAHS) Medical Center or in conjunction with a Veterans Health Administration (VHA) authorized hospital stay in the local community. The Fisher House will enable family members to be close to their loved one during a hospitalization by providing comfortable, cost free lodging, in a relaxed setting that will only be a short walk away from the VA Ann Arbor Medical Center.

This 13,400 sq. foot home, that is professionally furnished and decorated, is able to accommodate up to 16 families per night. Up to four family members will be able to share one spacious

guest suite, each with a private bathroom. Guests will share a fully equipped gourmet kitchen, modern laundry room, spacious dining room, an inviting family room, and outdoor patio. Each of the suites are furnished with telephones, smart TV's, alarm clocks, and DVD players. There is also free Wi-Fi throughout the home.

The VA Ann Arbor Fisher House has benefited from the tireless efforts of Fisher House Michigan, a non-profit organization, that has raised more than \$7 million of their \$20 million goal to support the construction of any Fisher House built in Michigan and to support the families utilizing the houses once completed. Fisher House Foundation constructed the house and gifted it to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to support the need in Michigan upon its completion on April 20, 2020. Construction on the VA Ann Arbor Fisher House began in late April 2019 and the groundbreaking ceremony took place June 14, 2019.



16 families
that can be
accommodated
per night

3 days average
length of stay

709 families
served in 2020

1,250 individual
guests served

4 members per
family each night

\$53,332
individual donations

www.fisherhouse.org

www.annarbor.va.gov/services/VAAHS_Fisher_House

www.fisherhousemichigan.org

VAAHHS PHYSICIANS AWARDED MASTERSHIP IN THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS

VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System physicians Eve Kerr, M.D. and Sanjaya Saint M.D. have been awarded Mastership in the American College of Physicians (ACP), the national organization of internists.

Election to Mastership recognizes outstanding and extraordinary career accomplishments. Masters must have made a notable contribution to medicine. This includes, but is not limited to teaching, outstanding work in clinical medicine (research or practice), contributions to preventive medicine, improvements in the delivery of health care, and/or contributions to the medical literature.

According to ACP bylaws, Masters are elected “on account of personal character, positions of honor, contributions toward furthering the purposes of the ACP, eminence in practice or in medical research, or other attainments in science or in the art of medicine.” ACP activities are also taken into consideration for all candidates. This includes service to the ACP in an official capacity, participation in chapter activities, and involvement in the development of ACP products and educational programs. Volunteer and community service are also taken into consideration.



Eve A. Kerr
M.D., M.P.H.

Eve A. Kerr, M.D., M.P.H., is the Louis Newburgh Research Professor of Internal Medicine at the University of Michigan, the inaugural Vice Chair of Diversity, Equity and Well-being for the Department of Internal Medicine, the Director of the Michigan Program on Value Enhancement and Senior Investigator at the VA Center for Clinical Management Research.



Sanjay Saint
M.D., M.P.H.

Sanjay Saint, M.D., M.P.H., is the Chief of Medicine at the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System and the George Dock Professor of Internal Medicine at the University of Michigan.

He received his Medical Doctorate from UCLA, completed a medical residency and chief residency at the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF), and obtained a Masters in Public Health (as a Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholar) from the University of Washington in Seattle.



About the American College of Physicians

The American College of Physicians is the largest medical specialty organization in the United States with members in more than 145 countries worldwide. ACP membership includes 159,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness.

**LTC CHARLES S. KETTLES
VA MEDICAL CENTER**

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**TOLEDO VA COMMUNITY
BASED OUTPATIENT CLINIC**

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419-259-2000

**JACKSON VA COMMUNITY
BASED OUTPATIENT CLINIC**

4328 Page Avenue
Michigan Center, MI 49254-1077
517-764-3609

**FLINT VA COMMUNITY
BASED OUTPATIENT CLINIC**

2360 South Linden Road
Flint, MI 48532-5483
810-720-2913

**PACKARD ROAD
VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC**

3800 Packard Road
Suite 120 (MHICM) and
160 (CWT, Homeless, VEAR)
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734-222-7600

**GREEN ROAD
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