



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Montana VA Health Care System

Montana VA to Unveil VA's First Mobile Medical Unit to Treat Veterans with Depression

Ribbon Cutting followed by VA Health Fair at Benjamin Charles Steele VA Clinic on July 21

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BILLINGS, Mont. – Montana VA Health Care System (Montana VA) is hosting a ribbon cutting at 11 a.m. on July 21st at the Benjamin Steele VA Clinic in Billings to unveil a [Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation \(TMS\)](#) Mobile Medical Unit (MMU). Montana VA is also hosting a Health Fair to help connect Veterans to their benefits.

The ribbon cutting and Health Fair are open to the public. The Health Fair will feature PACT Act information and toxic exposure screenings. The ribbon cutting takes place at 11 a.m. and will be followed by public tours of the Mobile Medical Unit. Dr. Michele Madore, VA's National TMS Program Director, will share information about this innovative program. The Health Fair goes from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 1766 Majestic Lane.

Montana VA's new TMS Mobile Medical Unit is an innovative first-in-the-country concept for the Veterans Health Administration. The MMU is a specially designed, high-tech vehicle that will travel across Montana to provide TMS treatment for rural Veterans.

TMS therapy is a treatment option for Major Depressive Disorder for patients who have not achieved an adequate response with antidepressant medication and/or psychotherapy. Recent advances in TMS have allowed for a more rapid treatment (five days instead of six to eight weeks) that may be more effective than standard TMS.

According to Dr. Elizabeth Walter, the TMS Program Director, and Dr. Emily McMillan, the TMS Clinical Program Coordinator, "Rural Veterans can now access cutting-edge mental health care because of the mobile TMS medical unit. Major Depressive Disorder is a significant contributor to suicide and linked to jeopardized health. Our goal for the Montana TMS program is to improve access to high quality treatment, reduce cost and disability associated with treatment resistant depression and improve the quality of life for Veterans throughout Montana."

TMS is a safe, non-invasive, and effective therapy that uses electromagnetic fields to stimulate nerve cells in the brain to improve symptoms of depression. A TMS-trained psychiatrist prescribes and administers TMS treatments. The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) approved TMS in 2008 for treatment resistant Major Depressive Disorder.

“This is a tremendous innovation,” said Dr. Judy Hayman, Executive Director for Montana. “We are so honored that we will be the first VA in the country to bring TMS to rural Veterans. Because Montana is so large and many of our Veterans live in highly rural locations, they would not normally have access this kind of therapy. Now, we can travel to bring this incredible therapy to help Veterans find healing from depression.”

The implementation of this program is made possible by a collaborative partnership with the VA VISN 19 Clinical Resource Hub and mentorship from the VA National TMS Program.

After the ribbon cutting, Veterans and their families are invited to tour the mobile medical unit and also stop by the Montana VA health fair to learn more about services and benefits. The Veterans Benefits Administration as well as Montana VA staff representing over 10 services and programs will be available to provide information and answer questions (such as for enrollment/eligibility, mental health, women Veteran services, toxic exposure screenings, and more).

One goal of the health fair is to help connect Veterans who may have expanded eligibility and benefits thanks to the 2022 passage of the [Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics \(PACT\) Act](#). There is no deadline to apply for PACT Act benefits, but Veterans are encouraged to file their PACT Act claim by August 9, 2023, which may make them eligible to receive benefits backdated to August 10, 2022. VA enrollment and eligibility experts will be available at the health fair to answer questions. (Veterans may learn more about the PACT Act at www.VA.gov/PACT or by calling 1-800-MY-VA-411).

Montana VA serves over 47,000 enrolled Veterans across Montana—an area roughly 147,000 square miles in size. Veterans are cared for by a staff of 1,400 at 18 sites of care across the state. One third of Montana VA employees are Veterans. Veterans can connect to their VA healthcare records, information, and message their VA care teams 24 hours a day through the [MyHealthVet patient portal](https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/how-to-use-mhv) (<https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/how-to-use-mhv>). Montana VA information, updates, and events are available on the [Montana VA website](https://www.va.gov/montana-health-care) (<https://www.va.gov/montana-health-care>) and [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/VAMontana) (<https://www.facebook.com/VAMontana>).

[Information on the Montana TMS Program can be found at: https://www.va.gov/montana-health-care/programs/transcranial-magnetic-stimulation-tms-treatment-for-depression/](https://www.va.gov/montana-health-care/programs/transcranial-magnetic-stimulation-tms-treatment-for-depression/)