



# VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System 2022 ANNUAL REPORT





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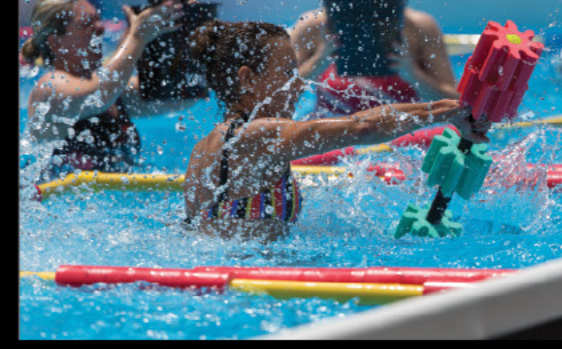
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# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

This year, the healthcare system achieved so many marvelous accomplishments because of all the hard-working VA staff who show up every day, ready to work, dedicated to the needs of our Veterans. All are eager to serve our nations heroes.

The first-ever meeting of the joint Michigan Market Strategic Planning group came together in August to establish a Market Based Strategic/Tactical Plan that identified six goals for the four lower Michigan VA healthcare systems: Transportation, Imaging Capabilities, Outreach/PACT Act, Market Based Referral Coordination, Consolidations of Resources, and Veteran Experience.

VAAAHS and the Battle Creek Healthcare System have combined and integrated Strategic Planning efforts in support of the Michigan-Erie Market. Through collaborative efforts, both health systems are consolidating services and key positions to better serve Veterans throughout the market based on referral patterns.

VAAAHS is tracking numerous Strategic Investments for FY23. Many include repositioning COVID staffing to meet the needs of the ever-evolving pandemic and return to in person care. In addition, we're making personnel investments to support the Oracle/Cerner integration and electronic health record modernization (EHRM) rollout.

The VAAAHS campus will become home to many of the VISN 10 Network Office staff (previously located at Dominos Farms in Ann Arbor). This will alleviate the need for expensive administrative office leases. Moreover, VAAAHS has established an agreement with the National Center of Patient Safety (NCPS) and other administrative offices to provide additional space.

We made personnel investments in support of the PACT Act and formally kicked off the outreach plan in December with an open house at the LTC Kettles VAMC. With nearly 60 events planned the first half of FY23 and more events on the way, we're reaching more Veterans than ever with important information

and resources for this historic improvement in Veteran care.

In another first for VA, VAAAHS piloted a screening process to identify health-related social needs (HRSNs) to make data-driven decisions to reduce health disparities and promote health equity. Disparities in health-related social needs are non-medical factors impacting patients' health outcomes as a result of social determinants of health (SDOH). It's a huge step in narrowing the health care gap for all our Veterans.

As you've noticed, VAAAHS is continually upgrading its infrastructure. We have several major construction and enhancement projects underway at any given time. These projects further improve our ability to deliver world-class care to our Veterans now and well into the future.

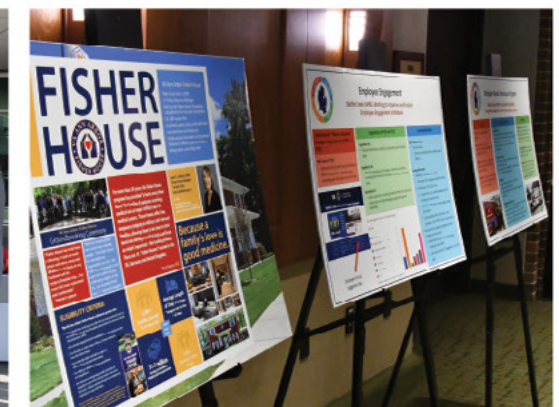
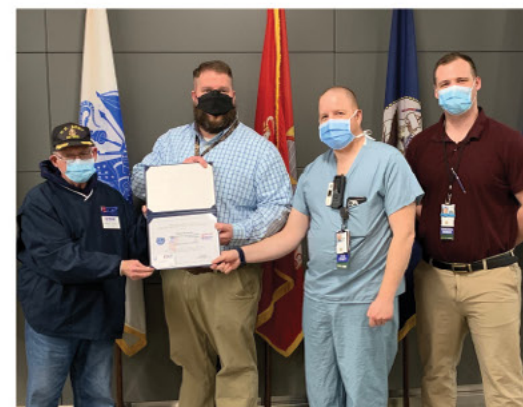
We rolled out new clinics at an extraordinary pace this year. In May VAAAHS activated a large multispecialty outpatient clinic in the Canton, Michigan. The new clinic is 37,000 square feet and will serve more 13,000 Veterans residing in the Southeastern part of our catchment area. The clinic provides Primary Care, Mental Health, Woman's Health, and numerous specialty services.

Additionally, VAAAHS activated two clinics in Lenawee and Livingston Counties in Michigan. The Lenawee (Adrian Clinic) activated October 1, 2021. The Livingston County (Howell Clinic) activated November 2, 2022. We're not finished. VAAAHS plans to activate a third new clinic in Hancock County Ohio in late 2023.

VAAAHS places a significant emphasis on the integration of health and environment. As such, Practice Greenhealth awarded VAAAHS the Environmental Excellence Award in recognition of our resolute focus on maintaining and improving the health of our environment and community.

VAAAHS is a world-class healthcare system. I am forever grateful to our VAAAHS community for all our successes over the years. I'm honored to serve with you.

*Jimmy L. Ruosimaa*







# THE 2022 PACT ACT

The Department of Veterans Affairs will expand and extend eligibility for VA health care for certain Veterans of the Gulf Wars and post-9/11 era.

This expansion will increase health care eligibility for hundreds of thousands of toxic-exposed Veterans. Additionally, VA has already expanded health care eligibility for certain Veterans of the Vietnam War. More detailed information about this expansion can be found on [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT).

President Biden signed the bipartisan PACT Act into law August 10, authorizing one of the largest expansions of VA health care and benefits in U.S. history. Veterans can go to [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT) to apply for health care or learn more about what this bill means for them and their families.

"This expansion will bring generations of new Veterans into VA health care, and increase the health care benefits of many more, which will result in the one outcome that matters most: better health outcomes for Veterans," said Denis McDonough, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "I highly encourage these Veterans to apply now for the health care they've earned and deserve."

Beginning on Oct. 1, Post-9/11 Veterans who did not previously enroll in VA health care will have a 1-year window to enroll if they:

- Served on active duty in a theater of combat operations during a period of war after the Persian Gulf War, or
- Served in a combat against a hostile force during a period of hostilities after Nov. 11, 1998, and

- Were discharged or released from active service between Sept. 11, 2001, and Oct. 1, 2013.

Also on Oct. 1, Veterans who served on active duty in a theater of combat operations during a period of war after the Persian Gulf War will be eligible for care. This includes Veterans who, in connection with service during such period, received the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Service Specific Expeditionary Medal, Combat Era Specific Expeditionary Medal, Campaign Specific Medal, or any other combat theater award established by federal statute or executive order.

Starting now, Vietnam-era Veterans who served in the following locations and time periods are eligible for care: The Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975; Thailand at any U.S. or Royal Thai base

between Jan. 9, 1962, and June 30, 1976; Laos between Dec. 1, 1965, and Sept. 30, 1969; Certain provinces in Cambodia between April 16, 1969, and April 30, 1969; Guam or American Samoa (or their territorial waters) between Jan. 9, 1962, and July 31, 1980; Johnston Atoll (or on a ship that called there) between Jan. 1, 1972, and Sept. 30, 1977.

While the expansion of PACT Act-related health care eligibility is staggered over the coming years, VA has made all conditions outlined in the PACT Act presumptive for benefits as of August 10, the day President Biden signed the bill into law. Eligible Veterans and survivors are encouraged to apply for those benefits now at [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT).





# ANN ARBOR FISHER HOUSE DEDICATION CEREMONY

VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System (VAAHS) dedicated the The Fisher House on September 23, 2022. The Fisher House was dedicated to America's service men and women and their loved ones.

The Fisher House provides bedrooms, kitchen, dining and family rooms, laundry and outdoor patio space to Veterans and their families who are receiving extended care at VAAHS. Since opening in June 2020, the 16-suite, 13,000+ sq.-ft. 'comfort home' has housed over 6,000 individual guests from more than 11 different states, saving Veteran and Military families over \$1.2 million in lodging costs.

VAAHS Medical Center Director Ginny Creasman was joined by U.S. Representative Debbie Dingell and Fisher House Foundation Chairman and CEO Ken Fisher at the Dedication. Medal of Honor Recipient Jim McCloughan also made remarks and presented a plaque from the Congressional Medal of Honor Society.

"The Fisher House has exceeded all our expectations

since it's opening," said Dr. Creasman. "The convenience, healing atmosphere, and proximity to the medical center allows us to meet the needs of our Veterans and caregivers by reducing the overall stress and burden an extended stay at a hospital may bring. It is our honor to be able to provide this 'home away from home' while Veterans receive health care with us."

"Fisher House Foundation is honored to bring this first house to Michigan," said Chairman and CEO of Fisher House Foundation Ken Fisher. "This house, in Ann Arbor, has already shown how critical the need is for our military and veteran community. We are grateful to such a supportive community that helped to make this Fisher House possible."

The Ann Arbor Fisher House was the first to be opened in the state of Michigan. Planning and development of a second Fisher House near the John D. Dingell VA Medical Center in Detroit is currently underway. Local fundraising efforts to support the construction and operations of both Fisher Houses are organized by

Fisher House Michigan.

"Michiganders are pouring their hearts into this mission. We're overwhelmed by the generosity of donors from all 83 Michigan counties," said Fisher House Michigan President Mark Palmucci. "Each family staying in this 'brick-and-mortar support system' heals along with their Veteran. We can't wait to expand access to this invaluable resource for more Veteran families with a Fisher House in Detroit."

Fisher House Foundation proudly recognizes the generosity of the following contributors for their extraordinary support of our military and veteran families: Fisher House Michigan; Anonymous; Masco Corporation; the MacLeod Family; the Weiser Family; American Legion Department of Michigan Family; Brad Keselowski's Checkered Flag Foundation; CAPT Victor & Mrs. Carol Palmucci, USN (Ret); In memory of Scott Freestone & Ron Arenas; Specialist Matthew T. Drake, US Army, Iraq; Steven Tallman; CPT Arthur J.

Holst; Patton's 3rd Army, 1943-1946; Erwin Prieskorn American Legion Post 46; First Nation Group; Kerri Childress; Mark Palmucci & Beryl Needham; Members of the Rotary Club of Ann Arbor; Members of UAW Local 900; Old National Bank; Richard & Jean Schmidt; Robert W. (Fletch) Fletcher; Spartan Capital Veterans Family Support Fund; Stutzmann-Moore Wealth Management; the Trinity Charitable Fund; University of Michigan - Michigan Medicine; Vehicles for Veterans; Vietnam Veterans of Michigan; and the many gifts of a grateful nation.







## **VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System Opens New Clinic in Howell**

VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System opened the new Howell Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) on November 2nd, 2022.

The facility offers basic medical services to more than 3,000 Veterans in the Livingston County area that typically receive care at the LTC Charles S. Kettles VA Medical Center in Ann Arbor.

Located at 3399 E. Grand River Ave. in Howell, the nearly 7,100 square foot space offers 2 Primary Care teams with 6 exam rooms, a blood draw lab, social work, dietetics, and a pharmacist for Veterans in the area.

The new location was chosen based on analysis of the Veteran population around the Livingston County area. VAAHS staff determined many Veterans in the area drove greater than 30 minutes for routine medical appointments.





# New VA Canton Community Based Outpatient Clinic Opens To Local Veterans

VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System (VAAAHS) opened a new Community Based Outpatient Clinic on May 11, 2022. The newly constructed facility serves nearly 12,000 Veterans across southeast Michigan.

Located at 5900 N. Lotz Road in Canton, the 43,700-square-foot facility offers an array of services including Primary Care, Women's Health, Mental Health, Whole Health, Radiology, Pain Treatment, Physical Therapy, Prosthetics, Lab Services and Pathology, Ultrasound, and Business Services.

"We are constantly evaluating how we can make health care more accessible to local Veterans," said Dr. Ginny Creasman, Director of VAAAHS. "We identified this geographical gap for a significant number of Veterans between Ann Arbor and Detroit. The new Canton CBOC will halve drive times for thousands of Veterans, bringing high-quality VA health care right into their neighborhoods."

Navigating through the Canton CBOC is much more patient friendly compared to older VA buildings. Rather than

long walks through a labyrinth of hallways and elevators, the single-story facility is easily maneuverable utilizing color-coded hallways.

"Behind the scenes, the new facility has large, open work areas for different providers to work collaboratively," said Meaghan Short, Interior Designer & Project Manager for VAAAHS. "Rather than bouncing from service to service, the Veteran stays in a single room while health care providers from different services easily navigate to them. A tremendous amount of thought and work went into the design of this facility."

Construction on the new clinic began in July 2020. It's the latest addition for VAAAHS, which recently opened another facility in Adrian in October 2021. Along with the LTC Charles S. Kettles VA Medical Center in Ann Arbor, the healthcare system also encompasses CBOC's in Jackson, Flint, and Toledo, Ohio. A new clinic is expected to open in Howell this fall. All told, VAAAHS provides medical services to more than 70,000 local Veterans.



# 2021 & 2022, ROGER J. GREKIN RESEARCH AWARD WINNERS



Dr. Eve Kerr

The Roger J. Grekin Research Award is co-sponsored by the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System (VAAHS) Research Service and the Veterans Education and Research Association of Michigan (VERAM). The Grekin Award was established in 2016 to honor Roger Grekin, M.D., a distinguished leader, educator, physician-scientist, and the VAAHS's Associate Chief of Staff for Research (ACOS-R) for 35 years. This award is intended to honor a VA researcher who has shown a commitment to the values that Dr. Grekin shared with us: a commitment to serve our nation's Veterans through excellence in research, leadership, service, and mentoring.

Dr. Eve Kerr has been awarded the 2021 VAAHS Roger J. Grekin Research Award. Dr. Kerr is noted for her leadership and served as the Director of the VA Center for Clinical Management Research, an HSR&D Center of Innovation (COIN), from 2008 to 2019. Currently Dr. Kerr serves as the Division Chief for General Medicine at the University of Michigan and remains active in VA research.

Dr. Kerr is internationally recognized for her research which has helped to develop innovative, clinically meaningful methods to assess and improve quality of care. Recently, Dr. Kerr has been leading efforts to inform health systems in setting priorities for decreasing low-value services. The goal of these efforts is to help VA deliver the safest, most appropriate care to our Veterans, by intensifying treatment when needed, but also decreasing services that are not needed.

Dr. Nithya Ramnath has been awarded the 2022 VAAHS Roger J. Grekin Research Award. Dr. Ramnath has been an Attending Physician at the VAAHS for the past 13 years and is currently the Section Chief of Oncology as well as the Director of Oncology Research at the VAAHS.

Dr. Ramnath is known for her exemplary patient care as well as her dedication to teaching of residents and fellows. As the Principal Investigator on multiple VA Merit Research Awards and the Program Director of the VAAHS Lung Precision Oncology Program (LPOP), Dr. Ramnath has single-handedly improved access to lung cancer screening and precision oncology trials for Veterans with non-small cell lung cancer. Furthermore, the infrastructure provided by the LPOP has the potential to generate resources for new areas of investigation and discovery.



Dr. Nithya Ramnath





# American Cancer Society

# VA

## The American Cancer Society Awards \$20,000 Lodging Grant to VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System

The American Cancer Society recently awarded a \$20,000 lodging grant to the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System to alleviate the financial burden of lodging costs for patients with cancer.

The grant is one of 90 nationwide lodging grants totaling over \$3.3 million awarded by the American Cancer Society in 2022. Based on assistance provided through previous grant funding, these grants will provide over 9,000 nights of free lodging.

For patients with cancer, lodging expenses can

present a significant financial barrier when the most effective treatment requires traveling away from home. Many people need daily or weekly treatment, often for several months.

"This generous grant will help us further meet the needs for our Veterans and their caregivers to provide them the necessary support they need during a time of healing," said Dr. Ginny L. Creasman, Director, VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System.

In 2022, more than 1.9 million new cancer cases will be diagnosed in the United States. In a large national study

published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute (JNCI) in April, American Cancer Society researchers found U.S. cancer survivors who reported medical financial hardship had a higher mortality risk.

"The financial burden of cancer treatment directly contributes to disparities in cancer outcomes," said Dr. Kathy Goss, regional vice president of Cancer Support for the American Cancer Society. "We're working to increase access and remove barriers to timely, high-quality cancer care. Providing these grants directly to local health systems and partners allows us to deliver assistance directly to patients when and where it's need

most."

From 1991 to 2019, there has been a 32% decline in cancer mortality. The American Cancer Society can directly attribute declines in the overall cancer death rate to investment of funds and resources in the areas of advocacy, discovery, and direct patient support. All people should have a fair and just opportunity to live a longer, healthier life free from cancer regardless of how much money they make, skin color, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status or where they live.



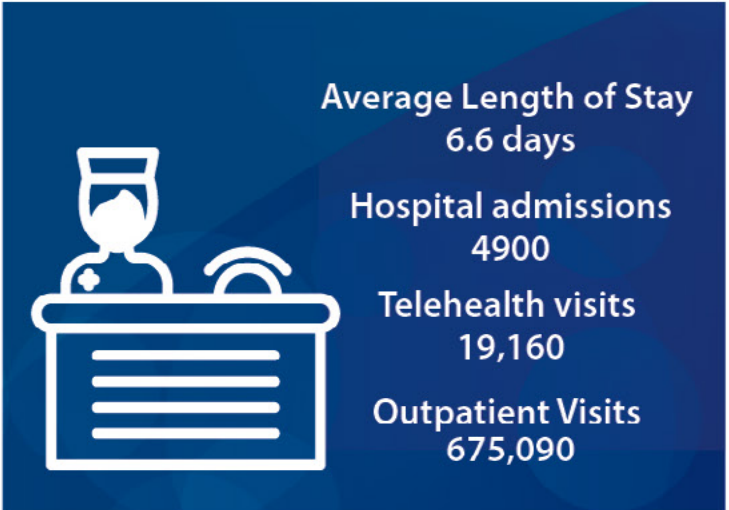
# 2022 By The Numbers

## Operating Budget - \$807M



## Veterans Served – 76,253

### By Era



## FISHER HOUSE



### By Age







## VA Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers expands to Veterans of all eras

Previously, PCAFC was only available to eligible Veterans who served on or after Sept. 11, 2001. This expansion opens the program to eligible Veterans of all eras, including those who served after May 7, 1975, and before Sept. 11, 2001.

PCAFC provides caregivers of eligible Veterans with resources, education, financial assistance, health insurance, beneficiary travel, peer support and more. The program is a cornerstone of VA health care, ensuring that Veterans get the world-class care they deserve and that caregivers get the comprehensive support they need.

“For the first time, eligible Veterans of all service eras can participate in the VA’s Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers,” says Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Donald Remy. “We recognize the critical role family caregivers play in caring for Veterans, and through this expansion, we’re able to ensure that family caregivers of all eligible Veterans have access to the comprehensive support they deserve.”

This is the second expansion of PCAFC, and it will expand access to the program for tens of

thousands of Veterans and their family caregivers. The first expansion of PCAFC began in Oct. 2020, as part of implementation of the VA MISSION Act of 2018. PCAFC has added approximately 20,000 active Veteran and family caregiver participants during the past two years.

Earlier this month, VA announced an interim final rule that will extend PCAFC eligibility for legacy participants, legacy applicants and their family caregivers, by three years to Sept. 30, 2025. Legacy Participants or Legacy Applicants are Veterans and their family caregivers who participated in PCAFC prior to Oct 1, 2020.

Learn more about the PCAFC expansion and VA’s Caregiver Support Program, reach out to a local CSP team or call our Caregiver Support Line at 855-260-3274 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET, and Saturday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET.







# EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT EXCEED EXPECTATIONS DURING PANDEMIC

As the COVID-19 pandemic progresses into its third year, the virus is continuing to show its true toll. Maintaining adequate staffing has proved incredibly challenging for health care systems across the country due to spikes in COVID-19 infections and employee burnout. However, the Emergency Department (ED) at the LTC Charles S. Kettles VA Medical Center has continued to exceed expectations and maintains a strong staff of nearly 40 nurses, doctors, and support personnel.

"I think it shows the dedication the nurses have towards our Veterans," said Heather Longshaw, ED Nurse Manager at the LTC Charles S. Kettles VAMC.

Along with their usual responsibilities of providing top of the line health care to those Veterans that arrive at the Emergency Department with urgent needs, the staff also shouldered the responsibility of becoming one of the first departments to operationalize the distribution of monoclonal antibodies.

Monoclonal antibody infusions give high-risk patients' immune system a "boost" to fight off severe illness resulting from COVID-19 infection. To date, the Emergency Department at the LTC Charles S. Kettles VA Medical Center has administered more monoclonal antibody infusions than any other VA hospital nationwide.

"We started basically right from the beginning. We were early adopters of the process," said Dr. Paul Kim, Director of the LTC Charles S. Kettles VAMC Emergency Department. "That's what has allowed us to give more monoclonal antibodies than anyone else in the VA."

It's a process far easier said than done. Special care and attention must be taken to prevent patients sick with COVID-19 and receiving the monoclonal antibodies from spreading the virus to other patients in the ED. Anthony Bono, who's been in a nurse in the ED for the last 13 years, credits teamwork and tight communications between the different shifts for keeping up with patient demands, which often seems to change drastically hour to hour.

"Especially during the heaviest point of the pandemic, with all the lockdowns, we were still pretty good at information sharing to staff on different shifts," Bono said.

Not only has the Emergency Department maintained their staffing, they've also been able to grow their team as the pandemic calls for more clinicians to keep up with Veteran's needs.

"For a lot of us, it's our relationships with each other," said Bono. "We're very welcoming to the new people. People don't have to "earn" their way in here."

The ED team has also tackled several other challenges on short notice, including running an efficient drive-thru COVID-19 testing process, which can see dozens of patients per day during surges in the virus.

"I'm super proud of my team. I love working with them. I want them to know they make a difference and I'm grateful for them" said Longshaw.





# GEROFIT MAKES A SPLASH!

GeroFit programs across the country provide free in-person and virtual exercise opportunities for veterans who are 65 years of age and older. GeroFit exercise classes and individualized workouts focus on cardiovascular, strength, balance, and flexibility training, all customized to Veterans' unique needs and fitness levels. This summer, the VA Ann Arbor GeroFit program, in collaboration with the City of Ann Arbor, began offering the very first GeroFit aquatic fitness class!

The GeroFit aquatic fitness class incorporates cardiovascular, strength, and balance training, just as its on-site and virtual counterparts do, but veterans are quick to note the decreased stress of water- versus land-based exercises on the body. Vietnam veteran David Zimmer of Chelsea, Michigan emphasized this: "It is still exercising, but with less impact on the old body and joints." For many, this translates into decreased pain levels while participating in exercises, allowing them to increase their exercise intensity.

The new dynamic of doing workouts at the pool has also led to better veteran interaction and camaraderie, increasing to pre-COVID levels. Veterans are able to laugh, share stories and enjoy group exercise.

Vietnam and Iraq-era Army veteran Ed Groom of Saline, Michigan states: "As a Veteran attending GEROFIT exercise classes for several years, adding the pool has brought a new dimension...and had a huge impact in helping Veterans socialize while improving their overall health in mind and body." Mr. Zimmer elaborated: "It offers the extra enjoyment of being able to interact personally with other fellow veterans. It's a fun class that I look forward to attending each week."

The aquatic fitness class is currently being held at an outdoor pool owned by the City of Ann Arbor, which donated a swim lane for 1-hour each week. GeroFit staff hope to continue this collaboration with the City of Ann Arbor after the summer season is over, moving the class into an indoor pool.





# VA AWARDS MORE THAN \$130M IN NEW GRANT FUNDING TO HELP HOMELESS VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS FIND STABLE HOUSING



On Sept. 13, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced that it awarded \$137 million in grants through VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program to help Veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and their families.

These grant awards supplement the previous FY 2022 SSVF grants, increase the number of Veterans who are eligible for SSVF assistance, and allow the 150 non-profit organization grantees to expand on existing services for Veterans and their

families. These grants are being awarded in addition to the FY 2023 SSVF Grants, which were announced Aug. 1.

In this calendar year, VA has already placed more than 22,000 homeless Veterans into permanent housing — putting VA on track to meet its goal of 38,000 permanent housing placements for homeless Veterans in 2022.

"It's our job to remove the barriers that stand between homeless Veterans and the

homes they need and deserve, including rising rental costs, cumbersome rental processes and more," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "These grant funds will empower our trusted VA partners to help homeless and at-risk Veterans through the entire housing process — from identifying a home to affording it to making it their own."

The SSVF grant awards can be used for: Supporting Veterans with HUD-VASH vouchers and connecting them with landlords from whom to rent. Providing

incentives to encourage landlords to rent to Veterans. Grantees will be permitted to provide up to the equivalent of two months' rent to landlords as a fee for any lease of not less than one year when necessary to assist a Veteran in remaining in or obtaining permanent housing.

Providing additional funds for move-in expenses to improve Veterans' quality of life by giving them essential items and home furnishings to help turn their house into a home.

Expanding program eligibility by lifting the income limit for participants from 50% to 80% of the Area Median Income in designated communities. This is significant because Veterans who previously may not have been eligible for assistance due to income restrictions can now receive assistance with identifying and obtaining permanent housing from SSVF grantees' housing navigators.



# BENEFITS OF VA'S NEW ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD

**VA** is working to improve the sharing of Veteran health information by implementing a new electronic health record (EHR), which is the software that stores patient data (e.g., prescriptions, immunizations, procedures, etc.) and tracks all aspects of Veteran care. This solution allows medical records to be shared across VA facilities and with the Department of Defense, the

Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Coast Guard and participating community health care providers. By implementing a single EHR, VA and its partners will ensure that active-duty service members retain a complete picture of their medical history in one system when they transition to Veteran status.



A shared federal EHR system provides several benefits:

- 1

A comprehensive view of clinicians' daily, weekly and monthly schedules.
- 2

A unified, integrated view of Veteran care, including private sector care and care received from DOD.
- 3

A single tool to assign staff to care for Veterans based on their credentials and acuity of care.
- 4

Grants clinicians direct access to Veteran demographic information.
- 5

An electronic capture of prescriptions filled by nonVA providers and facilities, which improves patient safety and provider efficiency.
- 6

The best of commercial practices merged with the best of VA care.
- 7

Resource-based scheduling that improves coordination of and access to care and provides a consistent patient scheduling experience.
- 8

Eliminates reliance on multiple systems and paper records and faxes.
- 9

Automated processing functions to help providers get work done faster and improve the user experience by moving key functions from multiple applications to one.
- 10

Streamlined medication reconciliation that eliminates the need for Veterans to endure repeat tests or relay basic information to different providers.
- 11

A single source for medical research trial management and oversight activities.

Read the [Benefits of VA's New Electronic Health Record](#) fact sheet for more information





# Employees Of The Month 2022



**Barbara Watson**  
**January**  
Licensed Practical Nurse,  
Surgery Services



**Timothy Gangway**  
**February**  
Red Coat Ambassador,  
Office Of Veteran Experience  
And Employee Engagement



**Brian Ashkar**  
**March**  
Human Resources Specialist,  
VISN 10 Human Resources  
Service- Strategic Business Unit



**James Reppert**  
**April**  
Registered Nurse/  
Cardiology Educator,  
Medicine Service



**Erin McElroy**  
**May**  
Executive Assistant to the  
Chief of staff, Office of the  
chief of staff



**Linda Longshaw**  
**June**  
Nurse Manager - Ambulatory  
Care, Ambulatory Care Services



**Joseph Franklin**  
**July**  
Chief of Maintenance And  
Operations, Facilities  
Management Services



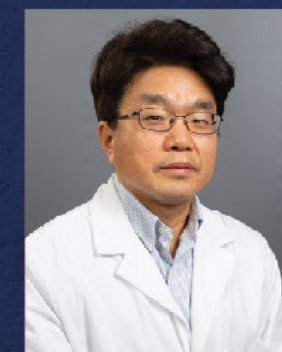
**Petra Flanagan**  
**August**  
Clinical Pharmacist,  
Pharmacy Services



**Dekandis Robinson**  
**September**  
Medical Support Assistant,  
Clinical Acces Managment  
Services (CAMS)



**Robin Dame**  
**October**  
Registered Nurse- ICUC,  
Patient Care Services



**Sae-Hong Lee**  
**November**  
Inpatient Pharmacist,  
Pharmacy Service



**Carolyn Slusher**  
**December**  
Instructional System Specialist,  
Employee Education Service



Just wanted to say thank you to everyone involved in the process. It is extremely appreciated and a wonderful start to a new year at Ann Arbor. I look forward to continuing to try to assist all of Ann Arbor, especially trying my best to assist in ensuring processes are successful.

I will only say this, my loyalty to Ann Arbor is because of the following:

Our Veterans, the employees at Ann Arbor and HR that give a 100% effort to provide the best service to our Veterans (directly and indirectly). The support from leadership is off the charts and I wish to continue building our amazing relationship. I look forward to see what's next to come. Thank you again this means a lot.

Respectfully, Brian Ashkar



VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System

# VETERAN'S COUNCIL BACK IN ACTION!

VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System (VAAHS) values our Veteran's experience as a patient at the LTC Charles S. Kettles VA Medical Center and our Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC).

The Veterans Council comprises a diverse group of Veteran's who receive care at a facility associated with VAAHS and are registered members of VAAHS Voluntary Services. This council of Veterans meets periodically to discuss new and old Veteran business and to hear Veteran suggestions for VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System.

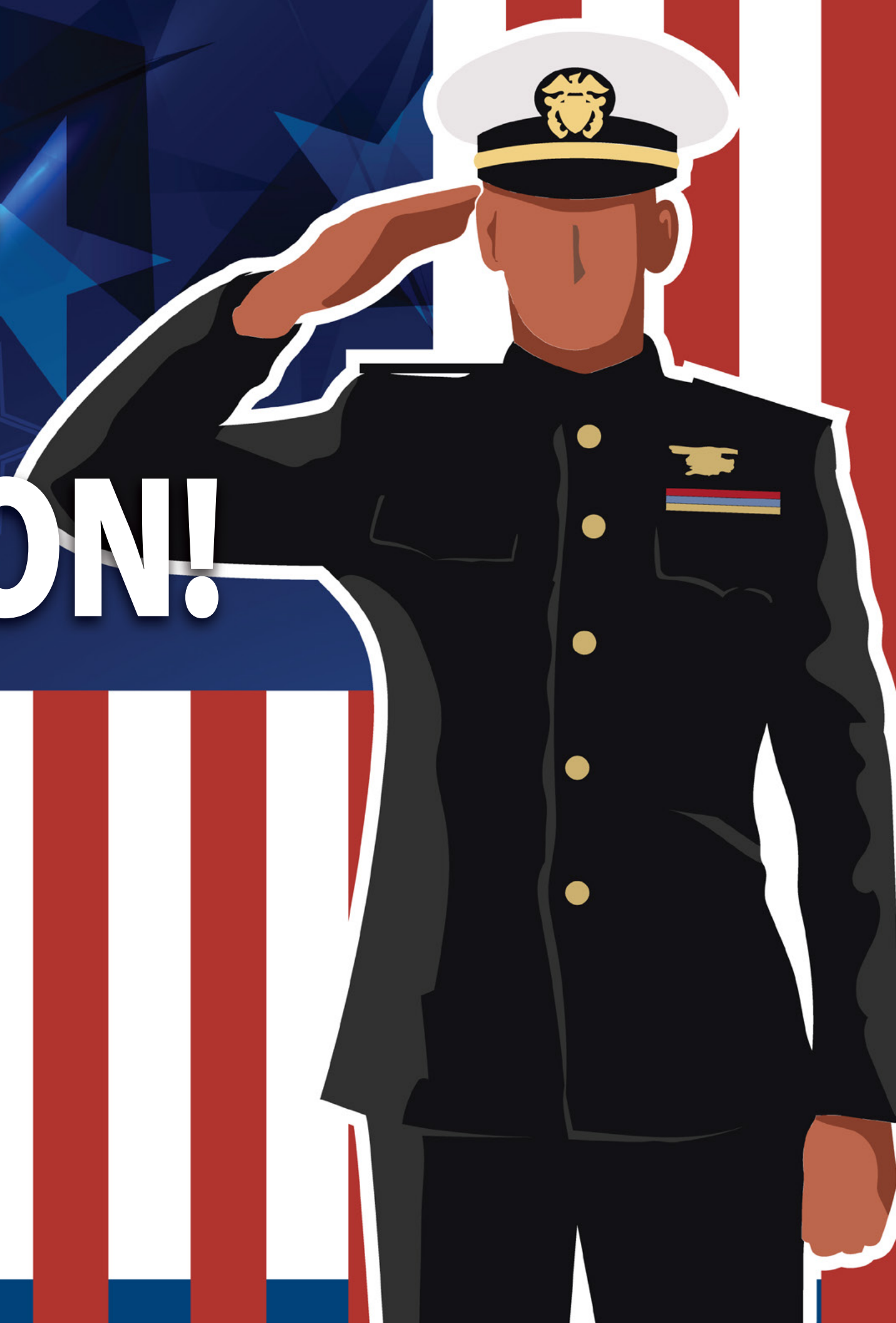
Two appointed Lead Representatives from the Veteran's Council will then meet monthly with our Veteran's Experience Review Committee to discuss this business and how VAAHS can improve the Veteran experience while receiving health care and related services.

The VAAHS Veterans Council is led by an elected Lead Veterans Council Representative who has

been utilizing VAAHS services for at least 5 years; 2 elected Veterans who have been utilizing VAAHS for at least 3 years that support the Lead Council Representative; and Sub-Council Leads that represent each one of VAAHS CBOC's and associated offsite locations.

Additionally, all Veterans may join the Veterans Council as Council Members. This membership is open to all Veterans who have received healthcare at one of our facilities in the last 6 months!

We highly encourage all Veteran's to become involved with VAVC! The Veteran's Council should represent the diverse population of Veterans that utilize our health care services. Every suggestion, opinion, and comment are extremely valuable to our health care system and guides our team to provide the best health care and experience each time Veterans and their loved ones trust us with their care!





# VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System Hosted Hiring Event

VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System (VAAHS) hosted hiring events on May 19, 2022 and August 18, 2022, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the LTC Charles S. Kettles VA Medical Center, 2215 Fuller Rd., Ann Arbor, Michigan. The event was open to the general public.

VAAHS is seeking several positions, including Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, Physicians, Medical Support Assistants, Nursing Assistants, and Health Technicians. Applicants for health care positions were encouraged to bring an updated résumé, 2 valid forms of government ID, copies of applicable licenses, certifications, and education transcripts. Well-qualified applicants may be given a start date in less than 24 hours.

VA recently earned the honor of being named one of America's Best Large Employers in 2022 according to Forbes, employing more health care employees than

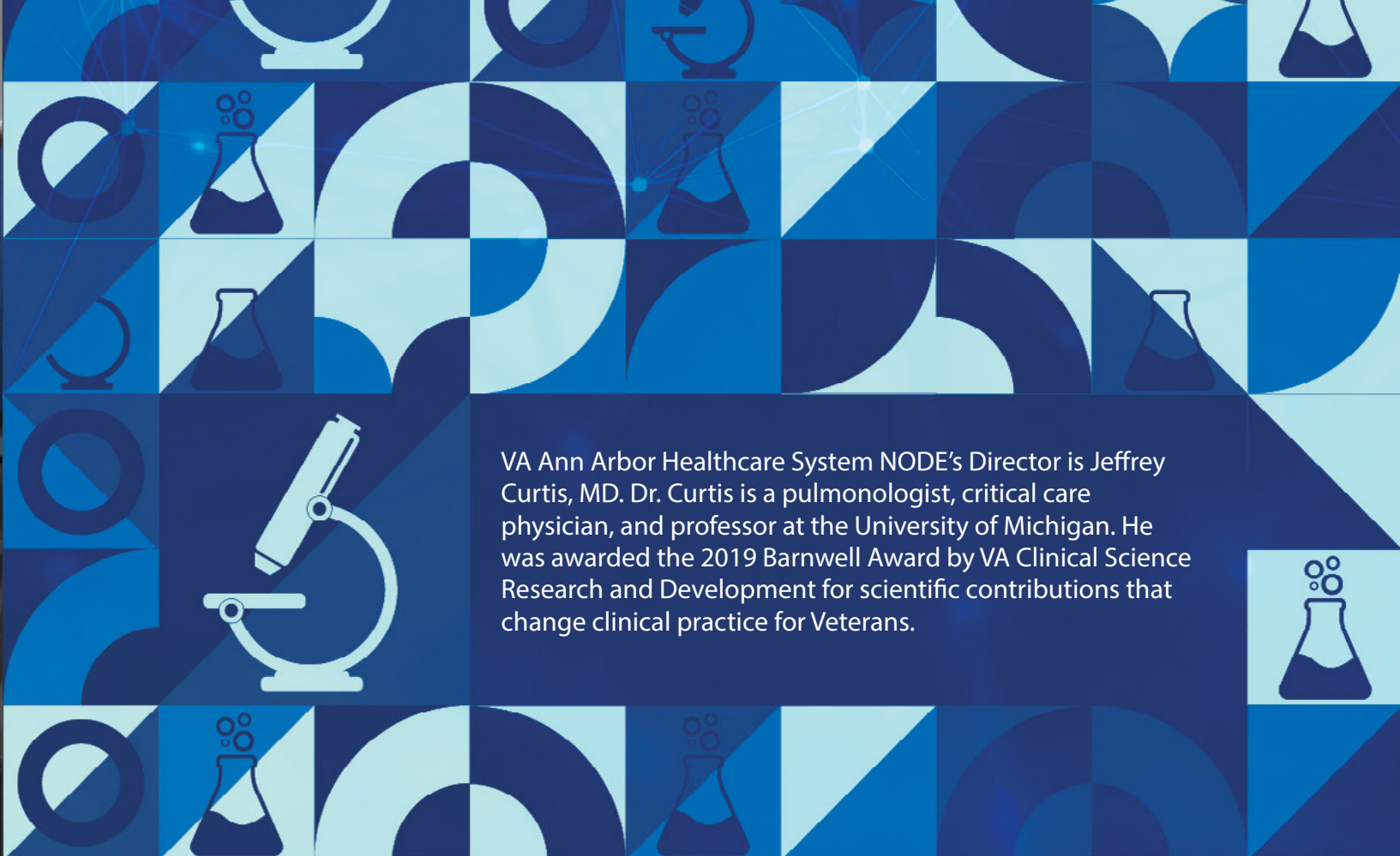
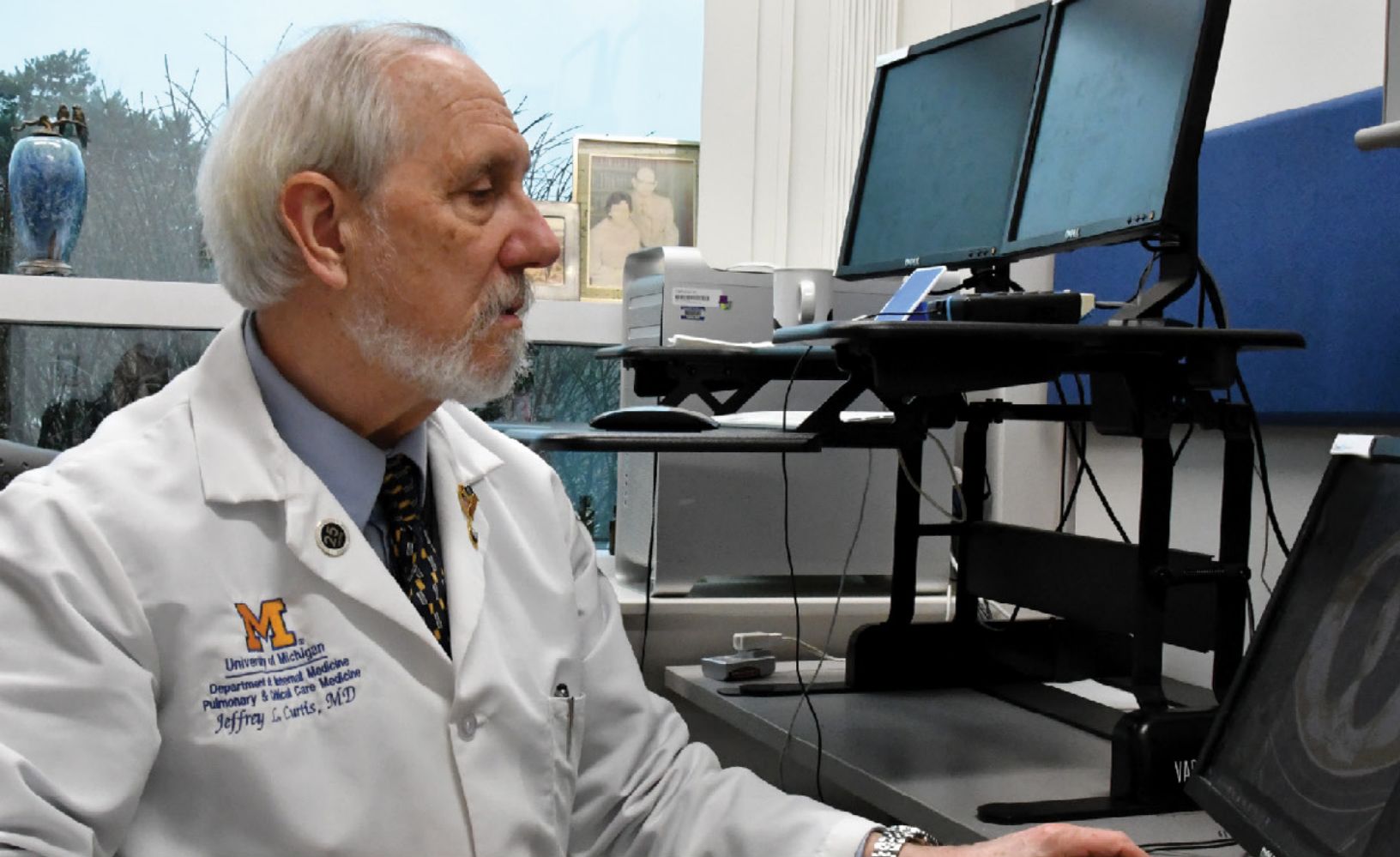
any other health care system in the country. VA offers one of the best comprehensive benefits packages of any health care system nationwide, including a variety of self or family health insurance plans, separate annual and sick leave banks, plus 11 paid federal holidays.

VA Nurse Locality Pay System ensures our nurses are paid competitive rates within each local labor market. Employment at VA is without employment contracts, noncompete clauses, restrictive covenants, or other significant restrictions outside work.

A select number of nursing positions are eligible for The Education Debt Reduction Program, a student loan payment reimbursement program that has helped more than 20,000 VA employees repay student loans faster.







VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System NODE's Director is Jeffrey Curtis, MD. Dr. Curtis is a pulmonologist, critical care physician, and professor at the University of Michigan. He was awarded the 2019 Barnwell Award by VA Clinical Science Research and Development for scientific contributions that change clinical practice for Veterans.

# VAAHS Research Service Joins Network of Dedicated Enrollment Sites

The VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System Research Service recently became VA's newest Cooperative Studies Program (CSP) Network of Dedicated Enrollment Sites, or NODES, joining nearly 2 dozen other VA Medical Centers (VAMC) across the country.

Within VISN 10, the LTC Charles S. Kettles VA Medical Center joins the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center as a designated NODES location.

According to VA's Office of Research and Development, NODES are a consortium of VAMC's that "have teams in place dedicated to conducting CSP studies to enhance the overall performance, compliance, and management of CSP multi-site research."

A memorandum notifying VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System (VAAHS) of its acceptance into the NODES consortium noted the "leadership qualities, clinical research environment, support for a collaborative environment, and dedication to NODES goals at your facility were all highlighted as being of the highest caliber among proposals received."

NODES work together to share best practices and provide local insights to

CSP Central Office and CSP Centers on study design and related considerations that can help with study management and conduct.

"The vision at the national level is that eventually VA will become a continuously self-correcting, self-proving organization that will involve as many Veterans as we can and continually deliver better care," explained Dr. Curtis.

Awarded at the end of 2021, the new NODES designation allows the VAMC to navigate the often-cumbersome research process more easily. This is accomplished by hiring additional employees whose responsibility is to stand-up clinical trials. The designation also allows for certain studies to be funded prior to their start.

"It's hard to get these trials started. Practically, as a clinical researcher, we're almost always paying for the study that we're starting with money we made from the last study," Dr. Curtis explained. "The advantage of the NODE is the Associate Director for Clinical Operations will work to try and stand-up trials."

Ultimately, Veterans benefit the most from this accomplishment attained by VAAHS Research Service.

"This will provide Veteran's access to these really high-quality trials where they might get a therapy that that has tremendous promise, but not yet quite proven," said Dr. Curtis. "These are typically phase 3 trials. It's usually a case of we know the therapy works, now the question is "Which therapies will work the best?"

The benefits of joining NODES will extend into the future. Curtis noted VAAHS' close connection to the University of Michigan, and how the inclusion in NODES will provide student researchers greater access to clinical trials and mentorship from established VAAHS researchers.

"It's a great way to finish off my career by establishing more infrastructure in Ann Arbor that's going to train the next generation and grow the research. I think it is tremendously beneficial for our Veterans."



“To fulfill President Lincoln’s promise to care for those who have served in our nation’s military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.”



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