

BUILDING ON EXCELLENCE

2022

VASDHS ANNUAL REPORT



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
VA San Diego Healthcare System

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, Fiscal Year 2022 was a momentous year for VA San Diego. We celebrated our medical center's 50th anniversary, and became the first VA medical center in the nation to be named after a female Veteran. Our main hospital is now proudly named the Jennifer Moreno Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, after U.S. Army Cpt. Jennifer Moreno, an Army nurse and San Diego native who gave her life in Afghanistan in 2013 while rendering medical aid to a fellow wounded soldier.

The year was also filled with a great deal of activity demonstrating a spirit of building on excellence — both literally and figuratively. In the literal sense, our construction crews erected the steel and concrete skeletons of the new Spinal Cord Injury/Community Living Center building and a new parking garage, as well as completed converting another of our hospital wings from antiquated multi-bed inpatient bays into modern, single-occupancy rooms. In the figurative sense, VASDHS staff continued to build on our foundations as a highly reliable organization by applying the principles of Leadership Commitment, a Culture of Safety, and Continuous Process Improvement.

As we continue building and improving our facilities, and investing in our capacity to provide excellent service and care, we are preparing to meet the future. Although the Veteran population in San Diego and Imperial counties is projected to decrease by 2 percent in FY23, the number of Veterans enrolled for and receiving health care at VASDHS is projected to increase by approximately 1 percent. With the August 2022 passage of the PACT Act, VASDHS anticipates the number of enrolled Veterans we serve to continue to grow. Knowing this, we continued to focus sharply on attracting and retaining incredibly talented clinical and administrative staff to improve the services we provided, and increase access to care for our Veterans.

Our team of dedicated professionals has reason to be proud of its accomplishments over the past year. Our Emergency Department piloted a new acute care program for our geriatric patients called SCOUTS — Supporting Community, Outpatient, Urgent care and Telehealth Services. This community effort earned VASDHS geriatric emergency department Level 2 accreditation and made San Diego the first county in the nation to have all its hospitals geriatric-ER-certified. Also continuing our efforts to be a highly reliable organization, nearly 700 of our employees completed National Center for Patient Safety Team Training, reinforcing our ability to ensure patient safety, and to facilitate effective teamwork and communication.

As we enter 2023, let me assure all Veterans that we will continue to build upon our past successes and live up to our top priority — improving health care outcomes by delivering excellent care and services to the Veterans we serve!



Frank P. Pearson
CAPT, USN (Ret)
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Director, VA San Diego Healthcare System

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

(left to right:)

AnneMarie Sachs, LCSW

Assistant Director

Cynthia Abair, MHA

Associate Director

Frank Pearson, DPT, PA-C

Director/Chief Executive Officer

Carmen Concepcion, MSN, MHA, RN

Associate Director

Patient Care Services/Nurse Executive

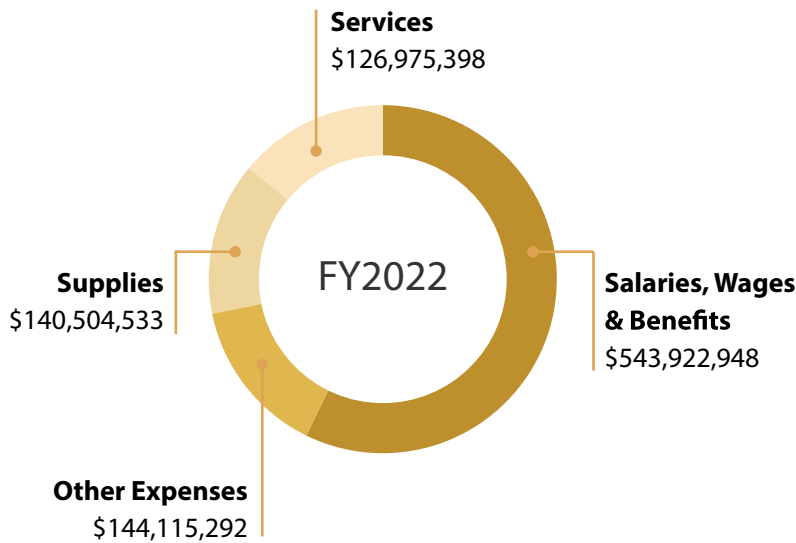
Kathleen Kim, MD, MPH

Chief of Staff/Medical Director

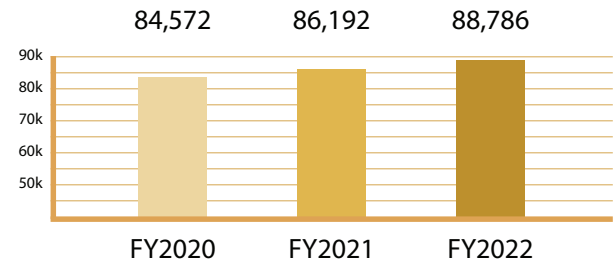


FY2022 FINANCIAL REPORT & STATISTICS

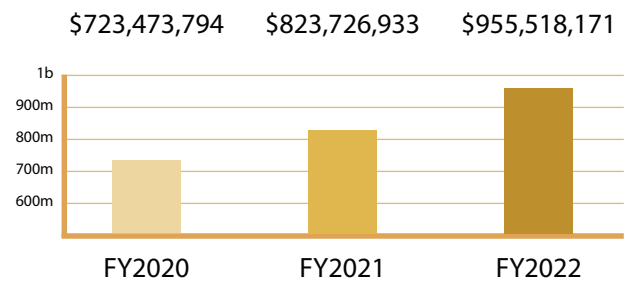
DETAIL OF OPERATING EXPENSES



VETERANS SERVED (PATIENTS TREATED)



OPERATING EXPENSES



FY2022 (10/1/21 - 9/30/22)

COMMUNITY CARE

Total: \$173,471,343

STAFFING STATISTICS

(FTE = Full Time Equivalent)

Employees (FTE) 3,761
Physicians (FTE) 422
RNs (FTE) 846
Other (FTE) 2,493

EDUCATION STATISTICS

Total: 1,809
Medical Residents and Students 1,441
Other Clinical Trainees 368

VOLUNTEER STATISTICS

Volunteers 464
Volunteer Hours 30,250
Donations including Summer Sports Clinic \$1,235,092
COVID-19 Donations N/A
Total Volunteer Impact, Value of Hours Worked Plus Donations \$2,141,078

RESEARCH STATISTICS

Total Research Funding \$46,200,000
Principal Investigators 180
Research Projects >650

WORKLOAD STATISTICS

Medical Center Beds Total (authorized) 296
Acute 134
Community Living Center 43
Spinal Cord Injury 50
Domiciliary/Aspire 69

ADMISSIONS TOTAL

6,621
Acute 6,233
Community Living Center 207
Domiciliary/Aspire 80
Substance Abuse Recovery Rehabilitation Treatment Program (SARRTP) 101

PATIENT DAYS TOTAL

75,706
Acute 60,407
Community Living Center 6,368
Domiciliary/Aspire 6,167
SARRTP 2,764

AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY

Acute 8 days
Community Living Center 25.8 days
Domiciliary/Aspire 27.4 days
SARRTP 39.8 days

SURGERIES TOTAL

4,713
Inpatient Surgery 1,258
Outpatient Surgery 3,455

OUTPATIENT VISITS TOTAL

1,055,181
Chula Vista Clinic 52,227
Escondido Clinic 16,814
Imperial Valley Clinic 5,113

Kearny Mesa Clinic (formerly Mission Valley Clinic) 168,404
La Jolla Medical Center 676,711
Oceanside Clinic 108,592
Rio Clinic 12,383

OUTPATIENT CARE BY MODALITY TOTALS

In-Person Visits 649,091
Telephone Visits 248,801
Virtual Care Visits* 162,135
*VA Video Connect, Secure Messaging, VA Home Telehealth, Clinical Video Telehealth, TeleRetinal and TeleDerm Imaging visits, and Telehealth appointments

ENROLLED PATIENTS 116,553

NUMBER OF VETERANS IN SAN DIEGO AND IMPERIAL COUNTIES

TOTAL (2021 ESTIMATE) 231,083
San Diego 225,066
Imperial Valley 6,016

ALTERNATIVE REVENUE FY2022

VASDHS collected \$21.9 million, composed of \$20.85 million in Medical Care Cost Funds (MCCF), plus external sharing revenue of \$770 thousand. These funds stay at our local facility to enhance services for San Diego Veterans.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

CARDIOTHORACIC SURGERY

Our cardiac surgery program is a consistent top performer, with mortality and complication rates well below national averages for these high-risk operations. In the past year, we had no deaths, no wound infections and fewer complications than would be predicted based on the medical complexity of our patients. Compared to all other VA hospitals doing cardiac surgery, we have a shorter length of hospital stay and a lower readmission rate within 30 days after surgery.



CONSTRUCTION

Construction on our new parking garage and Spinal Cord Injury/Community Living Center (SCI/CLC) building continued, with concrete work finished on the parking garage and steel erection nearly finished on the SCI/CLC. We completed several remodeling projects, including renovating our Prosthetics and Sensory Aides Service clinic and converting inpatient medicine/surgery unit 5 East D-Pod from multi-bed inpatient bays into eight modern, single occupancy rooms. Construction started on the last of three stages of our Emergency Department renovation project.



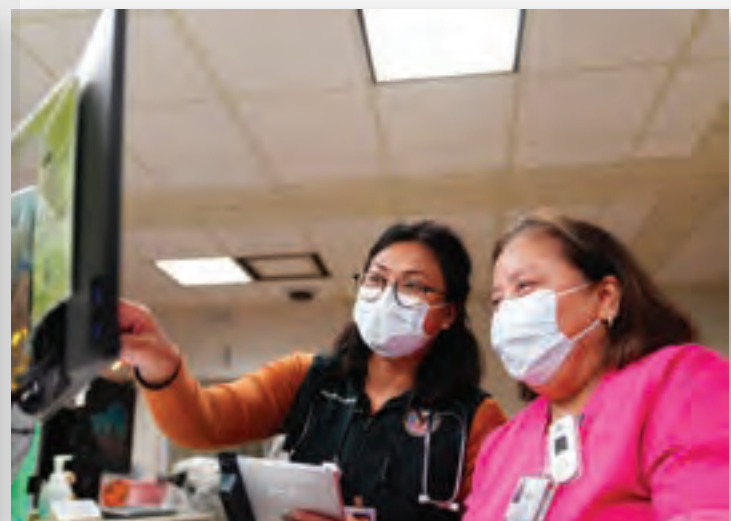
SCOUTS PROGRAM AND GERIATRIC ED LEVEL 2 CERTIFICATION

Piloting VA's new Supporting Community Outpatient Urgent Care and Telehealth Services (SCOUTS) geriatric emergency program earned us geriatric emergency department Level 2 accreditation, making San Diego County the first in the nation to have all its hospitals geriatric-ER-certified. The program complements existing geriatric Veteran program to include in-home visits by an Intermediate Care Technician (ICT) who provides a geriatric health care screening, medication review, and a home safety evaluation within three days of a patient's ED visit. The ICT assists patients with digital technology use. SCOUTS and other VA programs focused on older Veterans are part of the VA's initiative to build the nation's largest integrated Age Friendly Health System.



NATIONAL CENTER FOR PATIENT SAFETY TEAM TRAINING

National Center for Patient Safety (NCPS) Clinical Team Training was re-branded to the more inclusive name NCPS Team Training. The program centers on building highly





reliable teams and teaching specific behaviors to reduce patient risk, enhance patient safety, and facilitate effective teamwork and communication. More than 670 VASDHS employees completed the training last year. This past fiscal year, 26 classes were taught to 11 units/areas, and four additional employees joined the cadre of master trainers.

PRIMARY CARE

VASDHS flu immunization rates increased from the bottom third of VA facilities to the top third in FY22. We had the highest rate of hypertension control in VISN 22 increasing the number of our patients achieving blood pressure goals by 10% during the fiscal year.



RESPIRATORY THERAPY

Home Oxygen Coordinator Eandell Santos seamlessly transitioned 340 Home Oxygen patients (including six home ventilator patients) to a new oxygen vendor without oxygen supply disruptions to any patients. Santos also streamlined the equipment used for Home Ventilator patients, creating more continuity of care between the hospital and the patients’ homes, and simplifying caregiver education. She also was involved in a Root Cause Analysis regarding an inpatient who burned himself while smoking and wearing oxygen on campus. As a result, VASDHS now utilizes the same spark arrestors used in the Home Oxygen Program for patients ambulating unaccompanied while on oxygen.



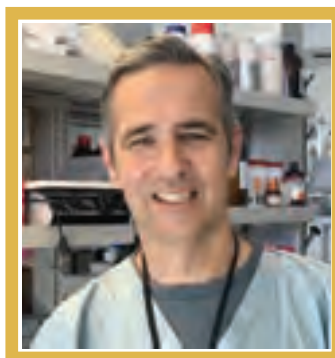
SOCIAL WORK

The Homemaker Home Health Aide program added five new community agencies to provide non-skilled in-home care to vulnerable Veterans, which increased our ability to provide care to Veterans in hard-to-serve geographic locations and decreased delays in services. The Intimate Partner Violence Program (IPVP) also rolled out the Strength at Home group to assist Veterans who use violence in relationships. This evidence-based practice is now recognized by the State of California to meet requirements for court-mandated treatment. The program also rolled out universal screening for Veterans experiencing intimate partner violence in the emergency department, and continued pilot screening programs in women’s health and 10 primary care clinics.



AWARDS

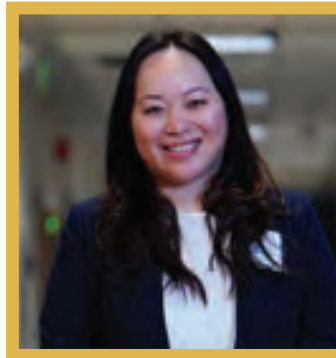
- Dr. Mark Fuster received a **VA Merit Award** for a research project titled “Glycocalyx targeting and augmenting cellular immunity in lung cancer.” This work focuses on novel ways to boost the ability of the patients’ own immune system to attack lung cancer cells. It stems from recent discoveries in the Fuster laboratory that revealed how altering certain complex sugars or “glycans” on the surface of immune cells in the body can facilitate a more aggressive attack against cancer. Dr. Fuster was also awarded a VA Senior Clinician Scientist Investigator Award for the future dates of 4/1/2026 - 3/31/2030, as an extended Merit Award that will fund work that builds on his VA Merit Award to develop anti-cancer immune modulator compounds. He has ongoing genetic validation studies, in addition to novel biophysical approaches, aimed to disrupt the surface of lung cancer cells via pulsed low-frequency magnetic fields.
- As Co-Investigators in a VA funded “**Lung Precision Oncology Program**” award (11/1/2020 -10/31/2025), VA San Diego secured additional funding of \$180,000 per year for the next three years to hire a dedicated Nurse Practitioner to support our Lung Cancer Screening Program and a Coordinator to further support the Pulmonary Section’s more general Lung Cancer diagnosis and care platforms.
- Dr. Michael Lam received a **VA Career Development Award** for a research project titled “Impact of sleep disruption on immune responses in sepsis.” This work will help define changes in immune function due to sleep disorders, with the goal of identifying targetable pathways to improve outcomes in sepsis. This award will protect Dr. Lam’s time so that he can develop as an independent researcher while also serving our Veterans in the intensive care unit (ICU) and on our pulmonary service.
- The Equine-imity Project, an equine-assisted therapeutic life skills program developed in San Diego in 2019 by HUD-VASH social worker, Dina Seerden, received a \$57,000 **Veterans Health Administration Innovators Network award**. This money was allocated to expand VA San Diego’s equine-assisted services program and to extend program to the Eastern Colorado VA Healthcare System. San Diego received approximately \$30,000 to increase their offerings to Veterans enrolled in HUD-VASH, M2VA and Aspire Center programs, and to attend training in the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association model. To foster greater understanding of the Equine-imity Project, Dina Seerden, LCSW and Amy Donarico, LCSW trained four new facilitators and conducted four staff demonstrations to 16 social workers. Since 2019, 33 San Diego Veterans have taken part in the program — 15 of them in FY22. Outcomes for patients who completed the 8-session program showed a statistically relevant increase in psychological flexibility and mental well-being as measured by pre and post program questionnaires.
- The Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) recognized Elaine Minsch, previously the SCI/D Inpatient and Outpatient manager with a **PVA Clinical Excellence Award**. She earned the **PVA 2021 Nursing Leadership Award**.
- VA San Diego Healthcare System’s Jennifer Moreno Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center earned the coveted **ENERGY STAR**® award for the 12th year in a row. To be certified as ENERGY STAR, a building must meet strict energy performance standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Specifically, to be eligible for ENERGY STAR certification, a building must earn an ENERGY STAR score of 75 or higher, indicating that it performs better than at least 75 percent of similar buildings nationwide while meeting national indoor environmental quality standards. “ENERGY STAR certified buildings save energy, save money, and help protect the environment by generating fewer greenhouse gas emissions than typical buildings,” according to the EPA.



Dr. Mark Fuster
VA Merit Award



Dina Seerden
VHA INOVATOR



Elaine Minsch
PVA Excellence



Jeff Salas
ENERGY STAR



MISSION

Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

VISION

- VHA will continue to be the benchmark of excellence and value in health care and benefits by providing exemplary services that are both patient-centered and evidence-based.
- This care will be delivered by engaged, collaborative teams in an integrated environment that supports learning, discovery and continuous improvement.
- It will emphasize prevention and population health and contribute to the Nation's well-being through education, research and service in national emergencies.

ACCREDITATION & CERTIFICATION

- The Joint Commission
- Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF): Aspire Center, Spinal Cord Injury, Medical Rehabilitation, Wellness and Vocational Rehabilitation Enhancement, Homeless Veterans Programs, and Substance Abuse Recovery and Rehabilitation Treatment Program
- College of American Pathologists
- American College of Radiology (ACR): Mammography, CT and MRI
- American Association for Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC)
- Nuclear Regulatory Commission
- American Association of Blood Banks (AABB)
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA): Registered Blood Bank and Mammography Program
- Clinical Laboratory Improvement Act (CLIA)
- Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)

VA SAN DIEGO HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Jennifer Moreno VA Medical Center
3350 La Jolla Village Drive
San Diego, CA 92161
(858) 552-8585
(800) 331-VETS (8387)

Chula Vista VA Clinic
353 H Street
Chula Vista, CA 91910
(619) 409-1600

Escondido VA Clinic
815 East Pennsylvania Avenue
Escondido, CA 92025
(760) 466-7020

Imperial Valley VA Clinic
1115 S 4th Street
El Centro, CA 92243
(760) 352-1506

Kearny Mesa VA Clinic
8875 Aero Drive
San Diego, CA 92123
(619) 400-5000

Oceanside VA Clinic
1300 Rancho del Oro Drive
Oceanside, CA 92056
(760) 643-2000

Sorrento Valley VA Clinic
10455 Sorrento Valley Road
San Diego, CA 92121
(858) 657-1980

Rio VA Clinic
8989 Rio San Diego, Suite 350
San Diego, CA 92108
(619) 228-8000

VA Aspire Center
2121 San Diego Avenue
San Diego, CA 92110
(855) 297-8397

VET CENTERS

Chula Vista Vet Center
180 Otay Lakes Road, Suite 108
Bonita, CA 91902
(877) 618-6534

San Diego Vet Center
2790 Truxtun Road, Suite 130
San Diego, CA 92106
(858) 642-1500

San Marcos Vet Center
One Civic Center Drive, Suite 150
San Marcos, CA 92069
(760) 744-6914

PROFILE

The VA San Diego Healthcare System (VASDHS) provides a wide range of inpatient and outpatient services at the medical center in La Jolla and at six community clinics in Chula Vista, Escondido, Imperial Valley, Kearny Mesa, Oceanside and Sorrento Valley. We provide medical, surgical, mental health, geriatric, spinal cord injury and advanced rehabilitation services. VASDHS has 311 authorized hospital beds, including skilled nursing beds and operates several regional referral programs including cardiovascular surgery and spinal cord injury care.

We are affiliated with the University of California San Diego School of Medicine and provide training for 1,271 medical interns, residents and fellows as well as 331 other health profession trainees in areas such as nursing, pharmacy, dental and dietetics.

VASDHS has one of the largest research programs in the VA nationally with a \$44.2 million budget, more than 200 principal investigators and 650 projects.



Member of the VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network
Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 22