



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 24, 2015

Group of Respected Medical Experts to Advise VA on Health Care for 9 Million Veterans

Special Medical Advisory Group Led by Dr. Jonathan Perlin of Hospital Corporation of America

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced a new 11-member Special Medical Advisory Group (SMAG) composed of leading medical experts to assist the Department in delivering health care to the 9 million Veterans enrolled in the Veterans Health Administration.

The SMAG is a reconstituted [federally-chartered](#) committee that advises the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, through the Under Secretary for Health, on matters related to health care delivery, research, education, training of health care staff and planning on shared care issues facing VA and the Department of Defense.

“We want the best of the best to work on behalf of our nation’s Veterans,” said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. “We are honored these respected leaders from the private, non-profit and government sectors have agreed to join in our mission improve how we provide the quality health care our nation’s Veterans need and deserve.”

The appointment of the new members of the SMAG comes at a time when VA is experiencing increased demand for its health care services. Nationally, VA completed more than 51 million appointments between May 1, 2014, and March 31, 2015. This represents an increase of 2.4 million more completed appointments than during the same time period in 2013-2014. In March 2015, VA completed 97 percent of appointments within 30 days of the Veteran’s preferred date.

Serving as SMAG Committee Chair is Dr. Jonathan Perlin, who previously served as VA Under Secretary for Health from 2004-2006. Dr. Perlin is currently Chief Medical Officer and President of Clinical Services for the Nashville, Tennessee-based Hospital Corporation of America (HCA). In this capacity, Dr. Perlin provides leadership for clinical services and improving performance for HCA’s 166 hospitals and more than 800 outpatient centers and physician practices. Recognized perennially as one of the most influential physician executives in the United States by Modern Healthcare, Dr. Perlin is a recipient of numerous awards.

Other Committee members:

- **Karen S. Guice, MD, M.P.P.**

Dr. Guice serves as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs and Principal Deputy Director, TRICARE Management Activity. In these two roles, Dr. Guice assists in the development of strategies and priorities to achieve the health mission of the Military Health System (MHS), and participates fully in formulating, developing, overseeing and advocating the policies of the Secretary of Defense. The Office of Health Affairs is responsible for providing a cost effective, quality health benefit to 9.6 million active duty uniformed Service Members, retirees, survivors and their families. The MHS has a \$50 billion annual budget and consists of a worldwide network of 59 military hospitals, 360 health clinics, private-sector health business partners, and the Uniformed Services University.

- **Joy Ilem, Deputy National Legislative Director, DAV**

Ms. Ilem, a U.S. Army service-connected disabled Veteran, was named Deputy National Legislative Director of the of the 1.2 million-member Disabled American Veterans (DAV), in June 2009. In this capacity, Ms. Ilem directs the advancement of DAV’s public policy objectives.

- **Thomas Lee, MD**

Dr. Lee serves as Chief Medical Officer for Press Ganey, which advises and consults with healthcare businesses to help identify the best practices for the organization and the patient. Dr. Lee joined Press Ganey in 2013, bringing more than three decades of experience in health care performance improvement as a practicing physician, a leader in provider organizations, researcher and health policy expert. As Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Lee is responsible for developing clinical and operational strategies to help providers across the nation measure and improve the patient experience, with an overarching goal of reducing the suffering of patients as they undergo care and improving the value of that care. In addition to his role with Press Ganey, Dr. Lee is an internist and cardiologist, and continues to practice primary care at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston.

- **Ralph Snyderman, MD**

Dr. Snyderman is former president and CEO of the Duke University Health System and director of Duke’s Center for Research on Personalized Health Care. He currently serves as Chancellor Emeritus for the Duke University Department of Medicine. He is former Chair of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC).

- **Jennifer Daley, MD**

Dr. Daley is a Senior Adviser for the consulting firm, Cambridge Management Group. She is nationally recognized for her expertise in operational improvement, patient safety, quality and service excellence. Dr. Daley is a past recipient of a U.S. Naval Academy-Harvard Business Review Ethical Leadership Award in July 2007.

- **James Henry Martin, MD**

Dr. Martin has been practicing emergency medicine and primary care medicine in the Chicago area since 1978 and is currently on the medical staffs of Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center, North Chicago; and Metro South Medical Center, Blue Island, IL.

He has extensive clinical research experience in the area of nasal insulin studies. Dr. Martin is currently developing a nasal mupirocin spray foam to eradicate nasal MRSA, and a nasal foam medication formulation. He has had 14 US patents issued and over 40 foreign patents issued, including a patent in 2014 covering the formulation above.

• **Melvin Shipp, OD, MPH, DrPH**

Dr. Shipp serves as Dean Emeritus, College of Optometry for The Ohio State University. He has served as a consultant, panelist and reviewer for several federal institutions –notably, the Food and Drug Administration, the Health Resources and Services Administration and in several capacities with the National Eye Institute (NEI) of the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Shipp also has assumed leadership and membership roles within a variety of non-federal, national health-related organizations. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, and a Diplomate and former Chair of the Public Health and Environmental Optometry Section. Dr. Shipp is only the second optometrist to receive the DrPH degree; he is the first to do so through the highly competitive Pew Health Policy Doctoral Fellowship Program at the University of Michigan.

• **James Weinstein, DO, MD**

Dr. Weinstein serves as Chief Executive Officer and President of Dartmouth Hitchcock, a nonprofit academic health system that serves a patient population of 1.2 million in New England. Anchored by Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, NH, the system includes the Norris Cotton Cancer Center; the Children's Hospital at Dartmouth-Hitchcock; affiliate hospitals in New London, NH, and Windsor, VT; and 24 Dartmouth-Hitchcock clinics that provide ambulatory services across New Hampshire and Vermont. Under Dr. Weinstein's leadership, Dartmouth-Hitchcock is working to create a "sustainable health system" for patients, providers, payers and communities. Dr. Weinstein also is a member of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences. He serves on the IOM Committee on advising the Social Security Administration on Disability. Most recently, Dr. Weinstein was one of four members appointed to the IOM Board on Population Health and Public Health Practice.

• **Deborah Trautman, PhD, RN**

Dr. Trautman is Chief Executive Officer for the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), a role she assumed in 2014. At AACN, she oversees strategic initiatives, signature programming and advocacy efforts led by the organization known as the national voice for baccalaureate and graduate nursing education. She has authored and coauthored publications on health policy, intimate partner violence, pain management, clinical competency, change management, cardiopulmonary bypass, the use of music in the emergency department and consolidating emergency services.

• **Bruce Siegel, MD, MPH, President and CEO, America's Essential Hospitals**

Since joining America's Essential Hospitals (formerly the National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems) in 2010, Dr. Siegel has used his extensive background in health care management, policy, and public health to achieve the association's strategic vision of its members as integrated delivery systems and leaders in access and quality. He served previously as Center for Health Care Quality director and health policy professor at The George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health. Before that, Dr. Siegel was president and CEO of two association member systems: Tampa General Healthcare and the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation. He also served as New Jersey's commissioner of health. Among many accomplishments, Dr. Siegel has led groundbreaking work on quality and equity for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, as well as projects for the Commonwealth Fund, the California Endowment, and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. He also chairs the National Advisory Council for Healthcare Research and Quality. *Modern Healthcare* has named Dr. Siegel one of the "100 Most Influential People in Healthcare" and one of the "50 Most Influential Physician Executives" for the past four years.

The announcement of the Special Medical Advisory Group follows the introduction of the Veterans Health Administration's "[Blueprint for Excellence](#)," which lays out strategies for transformation to improve the performance of VA health care now —making it more Veteran-centric by putting Veterans in control of their VA experience.

The SMAG Committee is scheduled to conduct its first meeting on May 13, 2015. More information about SMAG may be found at www.va.gov/ADVISORY/SMAG.asp.

###