U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Aug. 31, 2017

VA to Increase Access to Safe and Effective Lung Screening Programs

WASHINGTON — Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced a new partnership to increase access to lung screening for Veterans.

Sponsored by the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, the project brings together experts from within and outside VA to develop the VA-PALS Implementation Network (VA-Partnership to increase Access to Lung Screening). Its goal is to develop early-detection programs for lung cancer, a malignancy with an 80 percent cure rate when caught early.

This new project will launch lung-screening services at the Phoenix VA Health Care System by December 2017, and then extend these services to nine additional VA medical facilities starting in 2018. Once fully implemented, the project has the potential to become even more widely available throughout VA.

"This partnership is another example of VA's work to improve Veterans health and well-being," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. "The VA-PALS lung screening initiative demonstrates our priority to work together with outside organizations to provide more efficient care aimed at addressing serious health concerns."

The VA-PALS initiative builds upon lessons learned from currently available screening programs, including those of VA's Office of Rural Health, which is supporting the project's goal to reach Veterans living in rural areas. It also adds to a portfolio of other major VA lung cancer initiatives, which include the VALOR Trial (Veterans Affairs Lung Cancer Or Stereotactic Radiotherapy) and the APOLLO Network (Applied Proteogenomics OrganizationaL Learning and Outcomes).

"Research shows that with comprehensive lung screening programs, early identification of lung cancer leads to more effective treatments and, ultimately, saves lives," said John Damonti, president of Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation. "The Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation is proud to partner with the VA-PALS Implementation Network in this important step to increase access to state-of-the-art screening for Veterans at risk of lung cancer."

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