



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 12, 2019

Precision health initiative brings genetic testing to Veterans

VA and Sanford Health join forces to provide free screenings, improve patient care for cancer survivors

WASHINGTON — Today the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that, as part of an innovative partnership, VA and [Sanford Health](#), one of the nation's largest nonprofit health care systems, will soon provide free genetic testing to some Veterans cared for by VA.

The VA PHarmacogenomics Action for cancer SuRvivorship (PHASeR) testing program will begin a pilot program this year at the Durham VA Health Care System that will enroll all cancer survivors who receive treatment at the facility. The program eventually will expand to enrolling some 250,000 U.S. Veterans at 125 sites.

A [recent Dartmouth study](#) found that VA medical centers “[outperform private hospitals in most health care markets](#)” throughout the country.”

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie lauded the partnership, and said relationships like this will continue to expand the department's delivery of world class health care.

“This screening test will help providers at the VA prescribe the most appropriate medications at the right dose for cancer survivors,” Wilkie said. “Our goal is to continue delivering the best care possible for our nation's heroes, and this partnership helps us do just that.”

PHASeR is funded by a \$25 million gift from philanthropist Denny Sanford, for whom the health system is named, and an effort by Sanford Health to raise matching funds. The test can help providers determine which medications will be most effective for patients, improving access to appropriate treatments and reducing adverse drug reactions, which [research](#) shows costs up to \$30 billion per year.

The test results will help with clinical decision making for all types of prescribed medications, including cardiovascular and mental health diseases and pain management. Veterans will be able to access the test at their local VA facilities, and Sanford Health will process the tests at its South Dakota-based Imagenetics facility.

“We have seen firsthand how this testing can positively influence patient care,” said Kelby Krabbenhoft, president and CEO of Sanford Health. “Through the generosity of Mr. Sanford, we are proud to join VA to make the test available to our nation's Veterans.”

[Sanford Imagenetics](#) began in 2014, and more than 90 percent of patients who have been tested have been found to carry a genetic change that could affect medication selection or dosing. Test results are shared with physicians through the electronic medical record to ensure efficiency and accuracy in choosing treatments.

For more information on the PHASeR testing program resources for Veterans visit <https://imagenetics.sanfordhealth.org/veterans-genetic-testing/>.

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