



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Nov. 9, 2020

VA, Prostate Cancer Foundation to expand genetic services to Veterans through nursing research pilot initiative

Grant helps launch New Data Nurse of the Future program

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today a new nursing research and training collaboration with the [Prostate Cancer Foundation \(PCF\)](#) focused on expanding the role of advanced practice registered (APRN) nurses in the genetic services workforce and the delivery of precision [oncology patient care](#).

The expansion includes the creation of VA's New Data Nurse of the Future program as part of the department's joint effort with [PCF's Precision Oncology Program for Cancer of the Prostate network](#).

This program leverages genetic data and other sources of "big data" from the electronic health record to improve translational prostate cancer care and research. It increases Veteran access molecular testing, targeted treatments and clinical trials of novel therapeutics.

VA [Secretary's Center for Strategic Partnerships](#) facilitated the Office of Nursing Services-PCF collaboration which brings together multi-disciplinary experts in nursing, clinical genetics and medical oncology to launch a curriculum of coursework and clinical research training that will culminate in the credentialing of APRNs who will serve Veterans in the VA-PCF network of [Centers of Excellence](#) and affiliated sites.

"As the largest segment of the nation's health workforce, the "New Data Nurse of the Future" program will be critical in delivering VA's innovative resources to our Veterans," said VA secretary Robert Wilkie. "VA nurses are vital to all facets of precision oncology care, including educating and counseling Veterans about genetic testing, targeted treatments, and opportunities to participate in clinical trials. This opportunity will help us expand genetic education and the workforce to optimize the clinical services for Veterans with prostate cancer."

By the end of the course, participating VA nurses will be able to integrate cancer genetics and oncology knowledge into clinical practice, apply practitioner-level proficiency to cancer risk assessment and case management, and recommend risk-appropriate options for cancer screening and prevention, among other proficiencies.

"Advances in precision medicine have changed the way nurses think about cancer. It's no longer about which organ is affected — rather much more important the genetic signatures that are common across different cancers," said Jonathan W. Simons, M.D., president and CEO of PCF. "Empowering nursing leadership in precision oncology will help us bring exceptional treatment options to not only our nation's Veterans, but potentially to all cancer patients around the globe."

Grants totaling \$600,000 grant from Independence Blue Cross of Pennsylvania and the Katz Foundation established the pilot. It will initially focus on serving Veterans in Philadelphia; Wilmington, Delaware; the Bronx, New York; and East Orange, New Jersey. The first cohort of two APRNs have begun their training with the national team of experts and are expected to complete the program within one year.

Each year, VA treats an estimated 40,000 prostate cancer patients, of which an estimated 15,000 have metastatic disease that require genetic consults and services.

Learn more about VA's [National Oncology Program](#).

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