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VA releases report detailing efforts to address COVID-19 pandemic

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs published a second installment report identifying the department's strategic response from July 1, 2020 to Jan. 1, 2021, to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

The results are a continuation of VA's pledge to share best practices and lessons learned with other government agencies and the private health care system while the country continues to fight COVID-19.

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 Response Report Annex A concludes that overall, VA has aligned responsibilities, communicated with stakeholders and employed an operational concept that produced an effective response in support of Veterans and communities around the country.

"We created this document so medical professionals can learn from our efforts to combat the virus," said Acting VA Under Secretary for Health Richard Stone, M.D. "As the nation's largest health care system, the department confronted the need for rapid and comprehensive action to protect the health of Veterans and contribute to federal support to the U.S. Meeting the challenges, VA acted with unity of effort and agility across 18 networks consisting of 171 medical centers."

The report cites conclusions, findings and recommendations across several categories, including:

- Planning.
- National and interagency coordination.
- Emergency management and readiness.
- Data and analytics.
- Capacity, supply chain and testing.
- Clinical operations.
- Research and outlook moving forward.

To continue responding to the changing needs of the pandemic, VA moved many appointments to telehealth meetings to keep Veterans and employees safe. There has been a monthly average of 745,545 video encounters resulting in a 604% increase in home or offsite telehealth visits from the same period in 2019.

As the pandemic progressed, VA moved forward with actions to initiate its supply chain resiliency strategy. Procurement of personal protection equipment remained difficult due to scarcity in the market and at times, the department had to make PPE substitutions in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

In January, VA began using its National Surveillance Tool (NST) 2.0.

During the period covered by the report:

- VA participated in more than 292 COVID-19 research projects across 70 VHA sites.
- VA participated in clinical trials of five different Vaccine manufacturers sponsored by Moderna, AstraZeneca, Janssen, Novavax and Pfizer-BioNtech at six sites.
- VA authors published 84 scientific papers pertaining to COVID-19.
- Notably, the 3D printing initiative for pandemic supplies continues work on a sustainable business model scalable for surges in demand.
- VA's Pittsburgh Healthcare System and the University of Pittsburgh began to provide PPE and 3D-printed nasopharyngeal swabs for local facilities within its region.

The full version of the report can be found at <https://www.va.gov/health/docs/VHA-COVID-19-Response-2021.pdf>

Links to VA's previously published reports can be found here: [COVID-19 Response Plan](#) and [Charting the Course Plan](#).

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