

LIVING Better

A VA Butler Healthcare Quarterly Magazine

winter 2015



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VA BUTLER HEALTHCARE'S WINTER HIGHLIGHTS



1 Santa visited with Air Force Veteran David Brown and other Veterans in our Domiciliary as part of the annual Adopt-a-Veteran program. Special thanks to all the groups and individuals who provided cookies and gifts to our Veterans!

4 Butler High School JROTC visited with Veterans in the Community Living Center and Adult Day Health Care for the holidays. Thank you to all our volunteers and visitors during this past holiday season!

7 VA Butler's Women's Health and Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Programs hosted the second annual Winter Women's Wellness Event. One event highlight included a "Nutrition Kitchen" demo to teach women Veterans a healthy new recipe.

2 VA Butler held the first Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Recognition Event in December. The winning CQI project was *Power Wheelchair In-House Repairs* by Mike Donley, equipment specialist. Thanks to this project, considerable cost savings to the facility are anticipated.

5 VA Butler's third annual Healthy Living Recognition Event recognized 25 local Veterans for healthy living choices resulting in positive health outcomes.

8 Veterans in Adult Day Health Care, including Army Veteran Bernard Deblo enjoyed a special pizza and bingo lunch during National Salute to Veteran Patients Week held February 8-14.

3 VA Butler staff, volunteers and Veterans wore red on February 6 for National Wear Red Day—a special day to bring attention to the number one killer of women, heart disease.

6 A total of 636 food items were collected during the annual Healthy Living Food Drive to help Veterans in need. Ten individuals and five families received food throughout February thanks to this effort.

9 Army Veteran George Graham wore his tuxedo t-shirt to the "Date Night" dinner for Community Living Center Veterans during the 37th annual National Salute to Veteran Patients Week.

cover photo

Veterans at VA Butler's Domiciliary gathered in the snow to build "Sobriety the Snowman" using their well-earned sobriety coins for the buttons.



Dear Veterans, fellow employees, volunteers and friends of VA Butler Healthcare,

The snow and ice hasn't slowed us down this winter! VA Butler kicked off the New Year with several annual health and wellness programs, including the annual Healthy Living Food Drive, the Winter Women's Wellness Event, and Go Red For Women® Day. VA Butler's homeless team also participated in the national Point-in-Time Count to help end homelessness. As we look forward to warmer weather and sunshine this spring, we also look forward to more Veteran Town Halls, progress on VA Butler's new Health Care Center (HCC), and even more opportunities to Make Lives Better for our Veterans and their families.

John Gennaro, Director

C O N T E N T S

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VA Butler has a new type of group program for Veterans—a group for Veterans by Veterans. The program is called "Veteran X" and Veteran participants serve as the treatment team for a fictitious "Veteran X."



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More than 57,000 Veterans are using a new Prescription Tracker through My HealthVet. Learn more about this Amazon-like delivery tracking service available now for VA prescriptions.



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Date Night Prep

Wanting to look their best for "date night" during the annual National Salute to Veteran Patients Week, Veterans requested haircuts prior to the big night. A local hair salon volunteered its time and talents to cut Veterans' hair.



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Health Tech, Tips & Tastes

What's new and interesting in VA's health technology? Find out! Also, enjoy a health tip and tasty winter recipe.

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Executive Editor

John A. Gennaro

Managing Editor

Amanda Kurtz

Photographers

Lauren Heiger, Joshua Hudson, Chuck Jennings and Dennis Boice

“Veteran X”

Veterans Helping Veterans—A Great Thing



VA Butler Healthcare began a new type of group program for Veterans this past fall—a group for Veterans by Veterans. The program is named “Veteran X,” and Veteran participants serve as the treatment team for a fictitious “Veteran X.”

In the program, “Veteran X” has a number of challenges similar to those faced by the group’s participants. While helping “Veteran X” to solve his issues, participants gain valuable skills and information to help them resolve their own.

“A challenge of mental health recovery is moving from a passive recipient to an active collaborator in the treatment process,” said Cary Adkins, Army Veteran, Peer Specialist, and “Veteran X” Group Coordinator. “Many Veterans are unfamiliar with developing a treatment plan, and therefore, have difficulty playing an active

part in establishing the goals and objectives of treatment. “Veteran X” focuses on providing Veterans the opportunity to take an active role in choosing treatment goals and finding solutions to problems they may be facing.”

The hands-on process of “Veteran X” engages Veterans in their treatment, resulting in a Veteran-centered treatment plan. Each week Veterans address a new or ongoing problem/concern for “Veteran X,” often times enlisting the assistance and support of a VA staff member. For example, in a recent group “Veteran X” met with VA Butler’s My HealtheVet Coordinator and learned how to open and maneuver a My HealtheVet account. He also learned all of the benefits to having an account and about all of the different features of My HealtheVet.

www.mentalhealth.va.gov/mentalhealthrecovery.asp

This group is really about Veterans helping Veterans—Veterans sharing goals, information and solutions. So, what do the Veterans in the “Veteran X” group think about the program? One thing is unanimous: They *all* encourage other Veterans to attend.

**Woody Waddell,
Army Veteran**

“I started attending ‘Veteran X’ eight weeks ago to learn and provide support. I find the comradery the most helpful!”

**Robert Joe Blackwell,
Air Force Veteran**

“I started attending ‘Veteran X’ because I knew it was something that could be very good for me, and also useful. I am able to help others with the information I learned. I find the information, along with the love and understanding that exists between us Veterans to be the most helpful.”

**Wayne Brumagin,
Navy Veteran**

“While listening to others and proceeding through the ‘Veteran X’ scenario, I have found it to be a humbling experience. Based on the sharing of others, I should never judge a book by its cover when there is so much I don’t know.”

**Joe McKruit,
Army Veteran**

“Our guests each week not only bring their knowledge, but also take away the experiences and concerns of Veterans, and adjust their approach accordingly. We all feel part of the solution for an ever-changing and constantly improving VA.”

**Bill Barger,
Air Force Veteran**

“I find the people brought in to provide key information and answer questions about specific topics to be the most

helpful. “‘Veteran X’ has provided me with knowledge of services available to me as a Veteran. It’s also enabled me to self-advocate.”

**Rick Johnson,
Army Veteran**

“‘Veteran X’ has helped me feel a sense of belonging and comradery. It’s helped me recover my dignity, and the honor I felt in the Army.”

**Bob Sheppeck,
Navy Veteran**

“What I find the most helpful about ‘Veteran X’ are the other Veterans I have met. We all have issues, but together we are becoming a strong group of able people again.”

Scott Woods, Army Veteran

“‘Veteran X’ helps us advocate for ourselves and each other. I encourage other Veterans to attend to receive information about VA services that will benefit them.”

**Rick Atstupenas,
Marine Corps Veteran**

“I encourage other Veterans to attend this group. The friendship and education has been invaluable!”

**Andrew Slywczuk,
Army Veteran**

“The group brings back a sense of comradery that many of us lose after we are discharged. The group is Veterans helping Veterans—and that’s a great thing!”

The “Veteran X” group is held every Monday from 6-8pm, and Veterans are encouraged to join at any time. To learn more about the group, contact Cary Adkins 724-996-8892 or Rebecca Fast 724-285-2293. ★



24/7 Online Access to

New Prescription Tracker for Veterans on My HealtheVet

Veterans can now track the status of their prescriptions online, thanks to an innovative idea by a VA employee. The new 24/7 service available through My HealtheVet allows online tracking for most prescriptions mailed from the VA Mail Order Pharmacy.

The Prescription Tracker was recommended by VA employee Kenneth Siehr, a winner of the President's 2013 Securing Americans Value and Efficiency (SAVE) Award. Siehr's idea allows Veteran patients to track the delivery of their VA prescriptions online through My HealtheVet at

www.myhealth.va.gov. Siehr believed an Amazon-like delivery tracking service would improve customer service to Veterans by giving them the ability to track their VA refill medications online 24/7.

With the My HealtheVet Prescription Tracker, Veterans can:

- Track delivery of a VA prescription mailed in the last 45 days, anytime and anywhere there is internet access
- Know when their prescription package should arrive to their home or

- address of record
- View details about tracking information on each prescription
- Know if other items are included in the same delivery

This online, self-service option is designed to be both efficient and customer-focused. It can eliminate a portion of the estimated 1.8 million telephone calls to VA health care facilities generated from Veterans seeking to track their medication delivery each year.

To date, more than 57,000 Veterans are using the new Prescription Tracker through My HealtheVet, including Navy Veteran and Premium My HealtheVet user Edward Luczak. "The tracking feature allows me to know that my prescription has been processed. The tracking button alerts me, and gives me information about when it's being shipped." Luczak finds this especially helpful since one of his prescriptions requires someone to be there to sign for it when it's delivered. "With this new tracking feature, I know when my prescription is

coming and can plan to be home for it."

Luczak uses My HealtheVet for "everything"—from communicating with his health care team using secure messaging to refilling his prescriptions. "I use My HealtheVet all the time. Secure messaging helps me really stay on top of things since I am able to confirm different things with my health care team. I receive 18 medications, which can be very daunting at times. Being able to see the medications on the pharmacy list and track them on My HealtheVet is such a nice feature."

The number of Veterans using this new feature is expected to grow. Marine Corps Veteran Larry Tanner is one Veteran who plans to use this new feature soon. "I'm due to order refills, and I thought this could be my first opportunity to use My HealtheVet in this way. It seems convenient and you get the 'computer-speed' of doing things."

View Prescription Tracking Information Detail
(Prescription Delivery for KATHY TESTGPKTHREE)

Last Update of Tracking Information [08/08/2014 at 0730]

This page has detailed tracking information on your VA prescription. The prescription you are tracking was filled by the **VA Mail Order Pharmacy** and mailed in the last 45 days. It will also show if you have other VA prescriptions being shipped in the same package.

[Help](#) | [Printer Friendly](#)

| Prescription Information | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Prescription Name | ACETAMINOPHEN 325MG TAB |
| Prescription Number | 3635918 |
| Facility Name | SLC4 |
| Rx Information Phone Number | (555)342-4321 |

| Tracking Information | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Date Shipped | 07/15/2014 |
| Delivery Service | USPS |
| Select Tracking Number | 617000000515350000000001 |

| Other Prescriptions included in This Package | |
|--|---------------------|
| Prescription Name | TORSEMIDE 100MG TAB |
| Prescription Number | 3635919 |

[Return to List](#)

VA Prescription Status



So, how does the new Prescription Tracker work exactly? It's as easy as 1, 2, 3!

- Go to My HealtheVet at www.myhealth.va.gov, then to the home page to log in (*Note: To refill a VA prescription, Veterans must have an Advanced or Premium My HealtheVet account.*)
- Go to the "Pharmacy" tab
- Select "Refill My Prescriptions" or "Prescription Refill History." Once there, access the red "Track Delivery" button.

Over the next year, a secure messaging email notification alert (to the Veteran's preferred email address) also will be added to the Prescription Tracker so that Veterans know when a medication has been mailed.

Help with delivery tracking is available through the My HealtheVet Help Desk. Contact the Help Desk online by selecting the "Contact MHV" tab in My HealtheVet, or call the Help Desk directly at

1-877-327-0022, Monday-Friday, 8am-8pm eastern.

The new Prescription Tracker is just one of many features available for Veterans on My HealtheVet. If you are a Veteran enrolled at VA Butler Healthcare and are not currently registered on My HealtheVet...don't wait! Visit My HealtheVet at www.myhealth.va.gov today, or

call or visit VA Butler's My HealtheVet Coordinator at 724-285-2595, room 104. Veterans also may complete the in-person authentication (Premium account) at their next appointment at the main facility or any of our five outpatient clinics. ★

www.myhealth.va.gov

Date Night

VA Butler Healthcare celebrated the 37th annual National Salute to Veteran Patients the week of February 8-14. VA's National Salute is observed annually during the week of Valentine's Day, and is a day of caring and sharing that underscores the Salute's expression of honor and appreciation to Veterans.

"The National Salute to Veteran Patients gives everyone a chance to let those who have given so much to our nation know that they are not forgotten," said VA Butler Healthcare's director, John Gennaro. "This year's program included lunch and dinner dates, as well as visits from community members and organizations. All activities focused on bringing Valentine's Day cheer to our Veterans!"

One of the favorite activities of the week-long celebration was a special dinner date for Veterans in VA Butler's Community Living Center (CLC), sponsored by the VFW Ladies Auxiliary. Volunteers served as "dates" for Veteran residents who donned their fancy tuxedo t-shirts. Veterans and their dates enjoyed a night of food, laughter, and entertainment by a Patsy Cline impersonator.

Wanting to look their best for "date night," several Veterans requested hair-cuts prior to the big night. A local hair salon stepped up and volunteered their staff's time and talents to cut the Veterans' hair...and it wasn't their first time either! Shear Heaven Salon, located in Butler, volunteered to cut hair for Veteran residents for Veterans Day, Christmas, and recently

www.butler.va.gov/giving

"Those girls [Hilliary, Lyndsy, Tegan, and Tara] are just wonderful. They are so good to us Veterans!"
—Chester Pokusa,
U.S. Army Veteran



Local Salon Volunteers Hair-Cuts to Veteran Residents

for the National Salute Week.

Salon owner Tara Mueller was thrilled to do something to help local Veterans. "I grew up in the military. My father was a 21-year retired disabled Navy Veteran. I have a deep respect for our military and their service to our country. So, I find it my way of giving back and showing appreciation. Also, losing my father two years ago, I feel I help continue his legacy by helping and showing love to our Veterans."

On each occasion, Mueller, along with Hilliary Shields, Lyndsy Day, and Tegan Mueller, cut anywhere from 27 to 31 heads of hair. They did not leave until each and every Veteran's hair was done.

"The girls are very professional. They did an excellent job on my hair and beard. I'd like them to come back on a regular basis," said George Alexander, Navy Veteran. All the Veterans share George's sentiments, including Army Veteran John "Sarge" Kozlosky: "I think the girls do a great job, and I really enjoy when they are here."

Volunteers made the National Salute "date night" a truly special and memorable event for Veterans in the CLC. Additionally, volunteers made the whole week of events unforgettable. It included a chili lunch with Veterans in the Domiciliary, a pizza lunch and bingo day for Veterans in the Adult Day Health Care, and a visit from Butler Jr. ROTC members who passed out handmade Valentines.

Consider joining VA Butler Healthcare in honoring Veterans not only during the annual National Salute, but all year long. Learn more about VA's volunteer program. VA Butler is currently seeking volunteers to drive Veterans to and from their VA medical appointments, assist with the My HealthVet program, promote and assist with the online health maintenance program, provide companionship and comfort to Veterans in the hospice care program, and provide support for Veterans in the Community Living Center. For more information about volunteer opportunities at VA Butler Healthcare, call the Voluntary Service Office at 724-285-2575 or visit www.butler.va.gov/giving/index.asp. ★



From left to right: Hilliary Shields, Lyndsy Day, Tegan Mueller, Tara Mueller



Counting Every Veteran on the Way to Ending Homelessness

Since 2010 there has been a nearly 43 percent reduction in unsheltered homeless Veterans... but we're not done yet!

In January, all members of VA Butler Healthcare's Homeless Team, along with community partners, were activated to search for homeless Veterans, individuals and families. The team searched ramps, bridges, underpasses, alleys, behind stores, gas station, drop-in centers, 24-hour stores, eateries, and river banks—all familiar areas where the homeless population might be. The team also talked to local community members, and distributed literature listing resources and contact information in the hope it would be passed on to individuals/families in need. A crockpot luncheon also was held as an outreach opportunity to educate the community about homeless issues and possible needs.

This all-out effort was in response to the national Point In Time (PIT) Count held this year on January 28 as part of an effort to search for individuals and families living where no one should be living. By estimating the number of homeless Veterans, the PIT Count gauges progress in achieving VA's goal of ending Veteran homelessness by the end of 2015. Annual data from the PIT Count also assists VA staff and partner agencies in targeting homeless resources where they are needed most.

VA offers a range of programs that prevent and end homelessness among Veterans, including health care, housing solutions, job training and education. More information about VA's homeless programs is available at www.va.gov/homeless. Veterans who are homeless, or at imminent risk of becoming homeless, should contact VA Butler's Homeless Team. Dial 1-800-362-8262, press "0" for the operator, and ask to speak to a member of the Homeless Team. ★

Making Tennis More Accessible to Veterans

VA is partnering with the U.S. Tennis Association (USTA) Foundation, Inc., to make exercise more readily available to VA patients! The VA/USTA Foundation partnership will facilitate the formation of tennis clinics at VA medical facilities, link VA medical facilities with community resources, and provide consulting and design services to VA facilities interested in upgrading or building tennis courts.

The USTA Foundation will support VA in the form of coaching, instruction, equipment or use of courts or other technical assistance to sustain a tennis clinic. They will offer the recently developed "Warrior Tennis Curriculum," an electronic manual that provides rehabilitation therapists guidance through text, pictures and videos on how to use tennis as a therapeutic option to help Veterans stay fit and active.

While tennis is not currently offered at VA Butler Healthcare, there are plenty of ways Veterans can exercise regularly with VA's help and support. Weekly fitness classes and the Veterans Wellness Center are just two options available to Veterans for free. VA Butler also has a one mile walking trail! It starts at the front of the building and there are mile markers throughout it. Learn more; visit www.butler.va.gov/services/Health_and_Wellness.asp. ★



VA Eligibility & Enrollment— Annual Financial Assessment Change

Most Veterans who do not receive a VA disability or pension payment or have a VA special eligibility, such as a recently discharged Combat Veteran or a Purple Heart recipient, must complete a financial assessment when applying for enrollment to determine their eligibility for enrollment and copay responsibility for VA health care and/or prescription medication.

As of March 24, 2014, most Veterans are no longer required to complete the annual financial assessment known as a Means Test. Instead, VA will receive income information from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and Social Security Administration (SSA), and will contact Veterans only if the information

received indicates a change in their VA health benefits may be appropriate.

The elimination of the annual means test frees enrolled Veterans to enjoy their VA health care benefits without worrying about completing annual income assessment forms. Under the new process, Veterans will be required to have one financial assessment on file – their current file if they’re already enrolled, or the assessment they provide when they apply. That assessment will be maintained and monitored by VA and updated only as substantial income changes occur. Explore your health care benefits today—
<http://explore.va.gov/health-care> ★

VA Resources Help with Readjustment to Civilian Life

Transitioning to civilian life can be extremely challenging. The recent box office blockbuster *American Sniper* graphically illustrates just how difficult this transition can be. VA has developed, and continues to develop, resources to help Servicemembers and Veterans navigate the readjustment to civilian life. In addition to in-person resources available at VA Butler Healthcare, VA also provides online programs and telephone-based services. Some of those resources are:

- **Veteran Resource Center:** A trio of free and confidential online training courses has been created specifically to equip Servicemembers and Veterans with practical skills and tools they can use daily. These courses are ideal for individuals who want to learn skills at the time, place and pace of their choosing. These interactive courses feature real Veterans and military families who share their stories and offer lessons learned.

- **Moving Forward:** This course teaches skills to overcome stressful problems such as difficulties transitioning from military to civilian life, balancing work/school and family, coping with physical injuries, and relationship issues.

- **Parenting for Servicemembers & Veterans:** This course offers parents ways to reconnect with their children and strengthen their family. It covers everyday parenting and family issues, as well as addresses those unique to the military lifestyle.

- **Anger & Irritability Management (AIMS):** This course provides practical tools to help Veterans and Servicemembers better understand anger triggers, control their reactions during difficult situations, and get along better with people.
- **AboutFace:** This program provides a way to learn about PTSD from Veterans who live with it. Veterans share their stories about the challenges they have faced and how treatment has helped them turn their lives around. Family members also explain how their lives were improved once their loved-ones sought treatment.
- **Coaching Into Care:** This telephone-based support and coaching program is for family members who would like to help their Servicemember or Veteran get mental health care treatment. This confidential service also can help military family members learn new ways to talk with their loved-one about the difficulties they face and why treatment can help.

These are just some of the VA resources available to help Servicemembers and Veterans start and improve the next chapter of their lives. Many other important resources — such as Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-8255) and Make the Connection — can be found at mentalhealth.va.gov and ptsd.va.gov. VA Butler’s OEF/OIF/OND Team is available and ready to welcome home our returning servicemembers and make sure they receive the VA services they require and they have earned through their service. Learn more—www.butler.va.gov/services/returning. ★

SHARING
STORIES
AND NEWS
FROM
VETERANS
TO
VETERANS

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Vet Chat

A Little Piece of Home

U.S. Army and Vietnam Veteran Carl Martini has worked for VA since 1997, and truly enjoys coming to work every day. One of the reasons why: he is surrounded by co-workers who treat Veterans like family.

Martini's sons, Chris and Jeff, serve in the U.S. Navy. Chris, currently deployed to Afghanistan (his fourth deployment), was overseas during this past holiday season. VA Butler nurses Tina Parsons, Jodie Love and Pam Mrocek worked together to send Chris a care package over the holidays, not only this year, but last year too.

"My son really wants to thank them, as do I. Even more so, I want to thank them for their thoughts, kindness, and respect to all our military members serving, especially those overseas who cannot be with their loved ones during the holidays," said Martini. "These nurses went above and beyond. They truly treat Veterans here like members of their own family. They feel for a son being away from home for the holidays, and



wanted to give him a little piece of home. I will be forever grateful for that."

No matter if you served in Vietnam, or are still serving, VA Butler Healthcare welcomes you home and thanks you for your service. We are here and ready to provide health care and other medical services to our nation's heroes, our Veterans. For more information about VA programs available for recent returning servicemembers, visit www.butler.va.gov/services/returning. ★



Veterans Serving Veterans

VA operates one of the largest health care systems in the U.S. VA employs highly trained professionals who are dedicated to providing quality health care to Veterans, and many are Veterans themselves! Currently more than 30 percent of VA Butler Healthcare's employees are Veterans.

"I like working for VA because I'm serving my fellow Veterans every day. They're not patients to me; they're my brothers."

VA Housekeeper and Army Veteran
Carl Martini

Hey Veterans! Share your stories with us in Vet Chat.
Email Amanda.Kurtz2@va.gov. We'd love to hear from you!

Health Quiz: Test Your Back Health IQ

Millions of people are affected by back pain every day. How much do you know about back health? Find out with the quiz below, and contact your health care team at VA Butler Healthcare if you have any questions related to your back health.

1. What factors do you think cause or contribute to chronic back pain?

- a. Emotional or psychological stress
- b. Sports such as golf, running and contact sports
- c. An inactive lifestyle
- d. All of the above

2. Choose the statement you think represents the best way to respond to intense back pain (assuming you know it's not caused by a serious medical condition).

- a. Stay in bed and do as little as possible
- b. Just carry on and ignore the pain
- c. Take something for the pain and stay active
- d. None of the above

3. What is the most effective way to prevent back pain?

- a. Regular exercise
- b. Sleeping on a firm mattress
- c. Avoiding high heel shoes
- d. Carrying your brief case or bag as a backpack instead of on your shoulder

4. Surgery is the only effective cure for half of those with low back pain.

- a. True
- b. False

5. Once you develop chronic back pain, there's nothing you can do about it.

- a. True
- b. False

6. When should you see a doctor about chronic back pain?

- a. As soon as an episode begins
- b. When pain persists several days
- c. When pain persists more than two or three months
- d. Never

7. Which is a medical doctor with special training in non-surgical treatments for back pain, including therapeutic exercise, medication and other treatments?

- a. Physical therapist
- b. Chiropractor
- c. Psychiatrist
- d. Massage therapist

[www.butler.va.gov/services/
Physical_Medicine_and_
Rehabilitation_PM_R.asp](http://www.butler.va.gov/services/Physical_Medicine_and_Rehabilitation_PM_R.asp)

Quiz Results

1)D 2)C 3)A 4)B 5)B 6)B 7)C

Who's Who?

DR. MARGARET MOON



Physiatrists

Physiatrists are doctors who specialize in physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R). They treat a range of problems from sore shoulders and arthritis to spinal cord injuries and long-term disability, conditions that touch upon all the major systems of the body. They specialize in restoring function so that you can do the things you want and need to do.

At VA Butler, physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) is designed to increase independence and improve quality of life for Veterans with disabilities. Both inpatient and outpatient services include a balance clinic, kinesiotherapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, recreation therapy, speech therapy, and a wound/lymphedema clinic.

Dr. Margaret Moon is a physiatrist in VA Butler Healthcare's PM&R Department. Learn about physical medicine and rehabilitation, visit: www.butler.va.gov/services/Physical_Medicine_and_Rehabilitation_PM_R.asp

HALTING HEARING LOSS FOR CANCER PATIENTS

When cancer strikes, doctors do what they can to save lives. Chemotherapy drugs are potent weapons against cancer cells, but they can have serious and permanent side effects. One of them is hearing loss. Researchers at the VA Portland Health Care System have developed technology to help prevent this side effect. They call it the OtoID, and so far the system has been tested with the help of 110 volunteers and yielded promising results.

The technology itself doesn't treat the hearing loss caused by some chemotherapy drugs, but it enables patients to easily and reliably test their own hearing, so the first signs of damage can be caught early. In most cases, doctors will be able to adjust the dose of the drug, or perhaps use a different one.

The OtoID tests high-frequency hearing. That's the range where chemo-related damage typically occurs. Users listen to tones via headphones and use a touchscreen to indicate

the tones they hear. The latest version of the OtoID, now in the works, also tests low-level sounds produced within the inner ear, the cochlea, as it turns incoming sound into signals for the brain.

Right now, the team, made up of Drs. Marilyn Dille, Peter Jacobs and Dawn Konrad-Martin, plans to have the device deployed mainly on chemotherapy wards, so cancer patients can get a pre-treatment baseline measure of their hearing and follow-up periodically to check for changes. The plan is for the OtoID eventually to be used by Veterans and other patients at home.

The system, which runs off a tablet such as an iPad, allows test results to be transmitted back to a VA clinic via a secure wireless network. Audiology staff can then enter those results into patients' electronic health records for sharing with oncologists and other care team members.

With the help of VA's Technology Transfer Office, the OtoID has a patent application in the works, and commercial partners are being sought to license and manufacture the system. ★

How else is VA using technology to improve health care?

Find out for yourself!

- www.research.va.gov
- www.telehealth.va.gov
- <https://mobile.va.gov/>



Health Tastes - Chicken Pot Pie Soup



Ingredients

- 2 cups cubed cooked chicken breast meat
- 1 (16 oz) package frozen mixed vegetables, thawed.
- 1 (10.75 oz) can condensed cream of potato soup
- 1 (10.75 oz) can condensed cream of chicken soup
- 2 cups skim milk

Directions

Keep it simple in the cold months—just combine all the above ingredients in a medium sauce pan and heat through. Enjoy!

Calories: 375 ★ Total Fat: 13g ★ Carbohydrates: 36g ★ Protein: 30g

Crossword

Give Your Body AND Your Brain a Workout

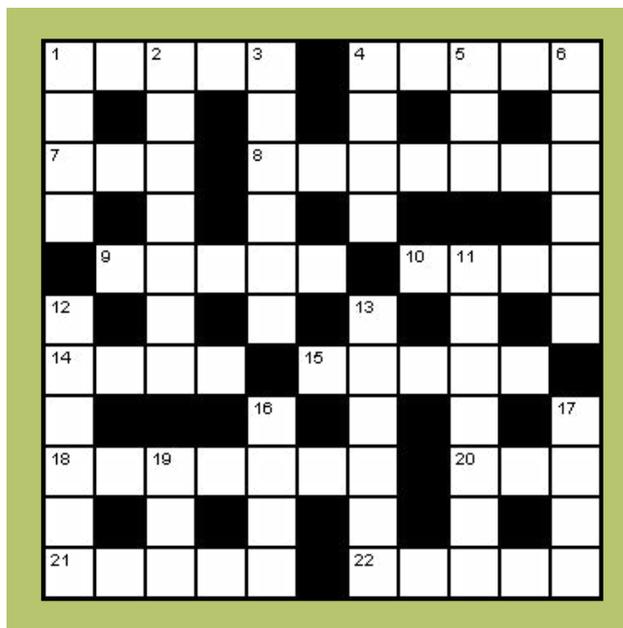
Giving your brain a workout through activities like crossword puzzles can help you think and remember better! But, don't forget about your body too. Research suggests that people who follow a mental AND physical exercise program have the biggest improvements in brain performance. So, if you want to stay sharp, make physical activity and mental activity a part of your day!

ACROSS

1. Banquet (5)
4. Velocity (5)
7. Golfing accessory (3)
8. Wild (7)
9. Fake (5)
10. Long narrative poem (4)
14. Fencing sword (4)
15. Temperamental (5)
18. Large imposing house (7)
20. Peculiar (3)
21. Lukewarm (5)
22. Part of the leg (5)

DOWN

1. Festival (4)
2. Amazing (7)
3. Second sign of the zodiac (6)
4. Location (4)
5. Type of tree (3)
6. Subtract (6)
11. Security device (7)
12. Recluse (6)
13. Part of the eye (6)
16. Discover (4)
17. Not in action (4)
19. Short sleep (3)



HEALTH

tip

Veterans
Crisis Line



1-800-273-8255
PRESS 1

15

HEALTH TIP— ASK FOR HELP

Strong people go for help. It is a sign of strength to ask for assistance and people will respect you for it. This free, confidential resource—www.VeteransCrisisLine.net—offers support to Veterans and their families 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.



ARMSTRONG COUNTY VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC

Klingensmith Building
313 Ford Street, Suite 2B
Ford City, PA 16226
724.763.4090

CLARION COUNTY VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC

AC Valley Medical Center
855 Route 58, Suite One
Parker, PA 16049
724.659.5601

CRANBERRY TOWNSHIP VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC

Freedom Square
1183 Freedom Road, Suite A101
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
724.741.3131

LAWRENCE COUNTY VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC

Ridgewood Professional Centre
1750 New Butler Road
New Castle, PA 16101
724.598.6080

MICHAEL A. MARZANO VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC

295 North Kerrwood Drive, Suite 110
Hermitage, PA 16148
724.346.1569

325 New Castle Road
Butler, PA 16001
800.362.8262
724.287.4781

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VA Butler Healthcare, located in Butler County, Pennsylvania **has been attending to** Veteran's total care since 1947. We are the **health care choice for** over 18,000 Veterans throughout Western **Pennsylvania and parts of Ohio** and are a member of VA Healthcare **VISN 4 under the U.S.** Department of Veterans Affairs. VA Butler provides comprehensive Veteran care including primary, specialty and mental health care – as well as management of chronic conditions and social support services for our nation's finest, America's Veterans.

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It's **our job** to give **her**
the best care anywhere.



WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE



learn more at
www.womensohealth.va.gov