

Veterans' Health Today

SUMMER 2010

**Informed Patients
are Healthier Patients**

**Advance Directive:
Freedom of Choice**

Where the Jobs Are

VA DESERT PACIFIC
HEALTHCARE NETWORK



 Department of
Veterans Affairs



INFORMED PATIENTS ARE **Healthier Patients**

issues, including PTSD,” says Cegielski. “The latest version includes links to an online Healthwise site that has quizzes, support groups, and much more.”

“For Veterans who aren’t online, we offer the Patient Education Resource Center, or PERC. We have three PERCs in Greater Los Angeles and one each in San Diego, Long Beach, Loma Linda, and Las Vegas. These centers have classes and literature available to Veterans and their families.”

Cegielski adds that VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network is also hiring Health Behavior Coordinators who will help motivate Veterans to exchange unhealthy behaviors for healthier ones.

“They help our diabetes patients adjust to the disease,” Cegielski says, “by assisting them with their diet or other limitations. Between our online information, the PERCs, and the addition of the Health Behavior Coordinators, we can show Veterans how to make healthier decisions and live longer, happier lives.”

VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network wants Veterans to have access to reliable health care information—something that has become much easier, thanks to the Internet. Sandee Cegielski, Patient Education Program Specialist, says, “Veterans with access to the Internet now have a wealth of medical information at their fingertips that can help them take control of their health by being an informed patient.”

For example, visitors to the VA Desert Pacific website at www.desertpacific.va.gov will see a link on the left side of the page to **Veterans Health Info & Education**, which opens a page with at least six online resources. One of those is a new feature called Krames Online, where Veterans can access more than 1,800 articles (available in English or Spanish) and 250 videos to help them make informed health care decisions and healthy lifestyle changes.

Another great resource is the MyHealthVet website. By clicking **Research Health** near the top of the MyHealthVet site, Veterans can learn about diseases and conditions, as well as view a drug database and a medical dictionary. The site also offers news on benefits and lets Veterans order prescription refills from home. Soon, patients will also be able to view appointments and lab results.

“We are also involved with the *Healthwise for Life* book, which covers many important Veterans’ health

CONTACT THE PATIENT EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER (PERC) NEAREST YOU!

- › Greater Los Angeles Patient Education:
 1. Sepulveda: 818-895-9569
 2. LA Ambulatory Care Center: 213-253-2677 ext. 4573
 3. West LA: 310-478-3711 ext. 43964
- › Long Beach: 562-826-8000 ext 2322
- › Loma Linda: 909-583-6197
- › San Diego: 858-552-7401
- › Southern Nevada: 702-636-3000 ext. 4370

Goodbye, Paper Medical Records

Okay, maybe it is a little premature to announce the end of traditional paper medical records, but VA's electronic health records system is changing the face of medical care. VA has been developing its electronic patient recordkeeping system for several decades and has actually set the pace for the health care industry!

So what exactly is it and what does it mean for you?

VistA—an acronym for **Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture**—is one of the world's most sophisticated methods for keeping electronic health records. It is VA's award-winning creation, and it means more effective care and treatment for Veterans.

For example, if one of your VA providers orders blood tests, any of your other VA providers can see the results. Before prescribing a medication, a VA provider can look at your electronic "file," see what other medications you take, and determine whether or not the new medication is a good choice. Another great benefit of an electronic medical file is that patients in rural locations can have remote consultations with providers who are many miles away, which gives you access to specialists without the time and trouble of traveling.

The power of the electronic health record doesn't stop with "written" records, however. Images such as x-rays, scans, slides, and photos also become a part of your electronic record and can be viewed by your VA providers. If you are an inpatient, the system electronically validates

and documents your medications to ensure that you receive the correct medication, in the correct dose, at the correct time—and it visually alerts staff if there is an error.

Another advantage of electronic recordkeeping is a dramatic decrease in the amount of paper required for each patient. Old-fashioned folders might have contained hundreds of pieces of paper for one hospital stay. Staff had to file each one and find space to archive the records for years. If providers needed to know something about your history, they had to flip through each piece of paper in your folder to find the information. Electronic records are also much more secure, as VA systems provide the highest possible level of privacy and protection.

Veterans are also encouraged to embrace VA's state-of-the-art technology. MyHealthVet, for example, is an online site that allows you to take a more active role in managing your health and in making decisions related to your health care. It allows you to track your health status, refill prescriptions, and receive reminders about health events.

Even though some paper documents may be around for the foreseeable future, VA providers and patients have access to high-tech tools *today* that are leading the way for the rest of the health care industry!



Are you a Veteran in emotional distress?

If so, you can now chat live with a crisis counselor.

Veterans Chat is **24 hours a day, 7 days a week** at

<http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans/Default.aspx>

If you feel you are in crisis and would rather talk to someone on the phone, call the

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

Press 1 for Veterans



Advance Directive: Freedom of Choice

Veterans bravely serve so that all Americans maintain a fundamental freedom: *choice*. Individuals get to choose where to live, whom to marry, how to worship, what to wear, which career to pursue, and so on.

But an overwhelming majority of Veterans fail to exercise their own “freedom of choice” at the end of their life. Does Tom want a blood transfusion if it’s needed after surgery? Does Joe want a feeding tube even if his prognosis is poor? Does Larry want to be put on a ventilator if he suffers catastrophic injuries in an automobile accident?

What do you want?

And more importantly, have you documented your wishes in an **Advance Directive** so that your family and your health care providers know what they are?

“Young Veterans tend to think they will live forever or that accidents only happen to other people,” says Joan Collins, RN, at VA Loma Linda. “Older Veterans may have thought about end of life care, but they haven’t shared their decisions with anyone. Young or old, it’s critical to make your wishes known, and we show Veterans how easy it is to do that with an Advance Directive.”

VA staff has established an easy process for completing an Advance Directive, and they hope every Veteran—regardless of age—will do so.

Collins says that patients are given multiple opportunities to fill out an Advance Directive before admission to a VA facility and during the admissions process. “Patients receive a pre-admission packet that contains information about Advance Directives, and we ask during admission if they’ve filled one out or have questions about how to do so. Information is also placed in bedside tables, and we have social workers and nurses who can help patients complete the form. It becomes part of the electronic record so that all VA providers can access it, and we also send the original and extra copies home for patients and their loved ones.”

About 80 percent of all Americans die in hospitals, and it can happen at any age. Exercise your FREEDOM OF CHOICE today by filling out an Advance Directive, which is available at all VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network facilities.

Beryl Bull, MD, at VA Loma Linda explains what happens when Veterans fail to complete an Advance Directive. “If you aren’t able to tell us what you want, we will try to find your family members to see if they know. As a last resort, we may have to ask others if they had conversations with you about your wishes for end of life care. We’d rather not do that, but it is sometimes the only option.”

Collins agrees. “I worked in an intensive care unit, so I know firsthand how hard doctors try to fulfill Veterans’ wishes for end of life care. But if they don’t know a person’s religious or personal beliefs, providers simply have to do whatever they think is in the patient’s best interest.”

Dr. Bull adds that if you already have a California Advance Directive, VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network facilities will accept those, as well. “Estimates indicate that about 92 percent of our Veterans do not have an Advance Directive,” she says. “We strongly encourage you to take the few simple steps that will help us provide the type of care you want and deserve...while you are still able to make that choice.”

Contact your primary care provider to learn more about completing an Advance Directive.

In perhaps the most publicized American case, 42-year-old Florida resident Terri Schiavo died in 2005 after years of legal wrangling about whether to remove her feeding tube. She had not documented her wishes for end of life care, so her husband and her parents argued in the courts for 15 years about what she would have wanted and who should be in charge of her care.



FACTS:

An Advance Directive is **NOT** required for admission to a VA facility, but Federal and California law requires VA staff to ask whether you have one.



An Advance Directive does **NOT** mean that providers withhold treatment. It means you exercised your “freedom of choice” and stated what treatment you want or you have designated someone to make decisions for you, if you are unable to do so.

An Advance Directive is **NOT** a one-time declaration. It is a living document that can be changed as your decisions, beliefs, or health care journey changes. At a minimum, review your Advance Directive every 3–5 years. VA social workers can help you review or make changes any time.

An Advance Directive is **NOT** the same thing as a “Do Not Resuscitate” (DNR) form, which tells health care workers that you do not want to be resuscitated if you are unresponsive.

VA ANSWERS THE CALL FOR HEALTH CARE ADVICE

VA health care access and advice is just a phone call away, 24 hours a day:

VA TeleCare
1-877-252-4866

Call toll-free to speak with a nurse. Completely free, confidential answers to your health care questions 24 hours a day.



Where the Jobs Are

So you've used your GI education benefits to start down the road to becoming a nurse, pharmacist, or other health care professional. As graduation draws near, you're starting to look at options for employment. Now is the time to check out all of the job opportunities at the VA!

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Federal government is the largest single employer in the United States with almost two million civilian workers. Over the next decade, a significant number of retiring workers will create a large number of job openings, making the U.S. government a great career choice.

Carla Burns, Network Human Resources Coordinator, points out that there are plenty of good reasons for considering a career in the VA.

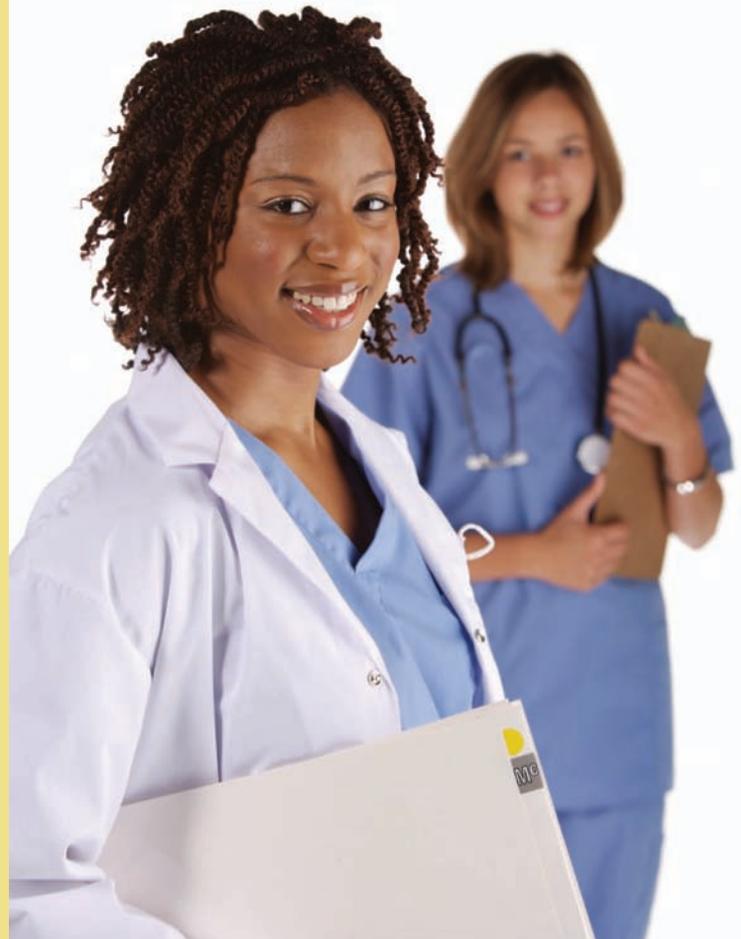
"There are excellent opportunities in health care positions, as well as in administration, technical support, and positions requiring specialized skills," she says.

"The VA offers an extensive list of benefits, including health care, retirement plans, sick leave, vacation, child care and transportation subsidies, and work/life balance programs. In addition, there are also programs offering relocation assistance and help for education expenses, such as the education debt reduction and student loan repayment programs."

Burns also explained that the VA is working on initiatives that will help streamline the application and employment process. "In the future, you'll be able to apply for all of our openings online. In addition, we are working to reduce the period of time from when a vacancy announcement closes to the date we make a firm offer of employment."

Among the websites to choose from when searching and applying for VA and other government jobs, Burns says that VACareers.va.gov and USAJobs.gov are excellent resources for any number of employment opportunities.

"I went through the job search process myself a little over a year ago," she adds. "I found that these sites provide valuable information on current employment opportunities and various programs, as well as the application process. USAJobs allows you to sign up for e-mail alerts that let you know when the type of Federal job you're looking for is posted. The key is to keep checking the job sites on a regular basis, as new positions open up all the time."



The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Veterans Employment Program (NVEP) assists Veterans in understanding and using Veterans' preference and other hiring flexibilities to gain employment in the Federal government and VA. The program promotes and advocates the hiring of Veterans by VA managers and supervisors. It educates selecting officials on Veterans' preference, and Federal hiring authorities are available to assist Veterans in gaining Federal employment. More information is available at www1.va.gov/NVEP/Hiring.htm.

Also consider these other valuable resources:

- › Department of Veterans Affairs - www.vacareers.va.gov and www4.va.gov/jobs
- › VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network website - www.desertpacific.va.gov
- › USAJobs.gov - www.usajobs.gov
- › U.S. Office of Personnel Management - www.opm.gov/job_seekers

Getting the Interview

USAJobs.gov offers excellent tips for creating or updating your resume.

- › **USE KEYWORDS:** Use “keywords” that potential employers may use to find applicants. For example, a recruiter who reads the keyword “analyst” might assume you have experience in collecting data, evaluating effectiveness, and researching and developing new processes. Study job postings to find keywords that match your requirements, skills, qualifications, or credentials.
- › **BE CONCISE:** Your resume needs to capture the attention of a hiring manager in 10–15 seconds, so don’t waste time telling your life story. Include only critical information that effectively “sells you” to the employer. Put the information that tells why you are a good fit for the position as near to the top of the first page as possible.
- › **REVIEW AND EDIT:** Once you think your resume is perfect, ask a friend (or two or three!) to review it for grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- › **USE NUMBERS:** Describe your accomplishments in clearly measurable terms, using numbers if

possible. Which of the following entries would impress you more:

- Wrote news releases.
- Wrote 25 news releases in a three-week period under daily deadlines.

For more tips, go to www.usajobs.gov/EI/resumeandapplicationtips.asp.

Landing the Job

VA uses Performance Based Interviewing (PBI) during interviews to ask job applicants about their knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics. Traditional interview questions usually ask applicants what they **would do** in a specific situation. PBI questions ask applicants to describe what they **have done** in a past specific situation. Rather than a simple “yes” or “no” answer, PBI questions require applicants to describe their experiences.

- › **Traditional interview question:** How would you handle an upset customer?
- › **PBI question:** Please tell me about a time when you had to deal with an upset customer. What was the problem? What did you do? What was the outcome?

Visit www4.va.gov/pbi/Interviewee/PBI_introduction.asp for more information about PBI.

VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network Vet Centers

Antelope Valley Vet Center

38925 Trade Center Drive
Palmdale, CA 93551
661-267-1026

Bakersfield - Coming Soon!

Corona Vet Center

800 Magnolia Ave., Suite 110
Corona, CA 92879-3123
951-734-0525

East Los Angeles Vet Center

5400 E. Olympic Blvd., Suite 150
Commerce, CA 90022-5147
323-728-9966

Henderson Vet Center

871 Coronado Center Drive, #200
Henderson, NV 89052
702-952-2885

High Desert Vet Center

15095 Amargosa Rd., Suite 107
Victorville, CA 92394
760-955-9703

Las Vegas Vet Center

1919 S. Jones Blvd., Suite A
Las Vegas, NV 89146-1299
702-251-7873

Los Angeles Vet Center

1045 W. Redondo Beach Blvd.,
Suite 150
Gardena, CA 90247-4129
310-767-1221

North Orange County Vet Center

12453 Lewis Street, Suite 101
Garden Grove, CA 92840-4680
714-776-0161

San Bernardino Vet Center

1325 E. Cooley Drive, Suite 101
Colton, CA 92324
909-801-5762

San Diego Vet Center

2790 Truxtun Road, Suite 130
San Diego, CA 92106
858-642-1500

San Marcos Vet Center

1 Civic Center Drive, Suite 140
San Marcos, CA 92069-2934
760-744-6914

South Orange County Vet Center

26431 Crown Valley Parkway
Mission Viejo, CA 92691
949-348-6907

Sepulveda Vet Center

9737 Haskell Avenue
Sepulveda, CA 91343-1618
818-892-9227

Temecula Vet Center

40935 Country Center Drive,
Suites A & B
Temecula, CA 92591
951-296-5608

Ventura Vet Center

790 E. Santa Clara, Suite 100
Ventura, CA 93001-2964
805-585-1860

West Los Angeles Vet Center

5730 Uplander Way, Suite 100
Culver City, CA 90230-6615
310-641-0326

Veterans' Health Today

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This publication is provided as a service to enrolled Veterans in So. California and So. Nevada.

Additional copies can be found at www.desertpacific.va.gov/publicaffairs.htm.
Address changes should be sent to your local VA medical center.

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California

Nevada

Symbol Key

- ★ VA Medical Centers
- ▲ Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

★ VA Medical Centers

VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System
P.O. Box 360001
Las Vegas, NV 89036
702-636-3000

Mike O'Callaghan Federal Hospital
4700 Las Vegas Blvd. North
Las Vegas, NV 89191
702-653-2215

VA Loma Linda Healthcare System
11201 Benton Street
Loma Linda, CA 92357
909-825-7084

VA Long Beach Healthcare System
5901 East 7th Street
Long Beach, CA 90822
562-826-8000

VA San Diego Healthcare System
3350 La Jolla Village Drive
San Diego, CA 92161
858-552-8585

VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System
11301 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90073
310-478-3711

★ VA Medical Centers

Cabrillo
2001 River Avenue, Bldg. 28
Long Beach, CA 90810
562-826-8414

Chula Vista
835 3rd Avenue, Suite B
Chula Vista, CA 91910
619-409-1600

Corona
800 Magnolia Avenue #101
Corona, CA 92879
951-817-8820

East Los Angeles
5400 E. Olympic Blvd. #150
City of Commerce, CA 90040
323-725-7557

Escondido
815 East Pennsylvania Ave.
Escondido, CA 92025
760-466-7020

Gardena
1251 Redondo Beach Blvd.
3rd Floor
Gardena, CA 90247
310-851-4705

Henderson
2920 Green Valley Parkway,
Suite 215
Henderson, NV 89014
702-636-6363

Imperial Valley
1600 South Imperial Drive
El Centro, CA 92243
760-352-1506

Laguna Hills
25292 McIntyre Street
Laguna Hills, CA 92653
949-269-0700

Las Vegas Homeless Veterans
916 West Owens Avenue
Las Vegas, NV 89106
702-636-4077

Laughlin Outreach Clinic
Coming Soon!

Los Angeles
351 E. Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
213-253-2677

Mission Valley
8810 Rio San Diego Drive
San Diego, CA 92108
619-400-5000

Oceanside
1300 Rancho del Oro Road
Oceanside, CA 92056
760-634-2000

Oxnard
2000 Outlet Center Drive
Suite 225
Oxnard, CA 93036
805-604-6960

Palm Desert
41-990 Cook St., Building F
Suite 1004
Palm Desert, CA 92211-6100
760-341-5570

Pahrump
2100 E. Calvada Boulevard
Pahrump, NV 89048
775-727-7535

Rancho Cucamonga
8599 Haven Ave., Suite 102
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730
909-946-5348

San Gabriel
420 W. Las Tunas
San Gabriel, CA 91776
626-289-5973

San Luis Obispo
1288 Morro St., #200
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
805-543-1233

Santa Ana
Bristol Medical Center
2740 S. Bristol Street
1st Floor, Suite 110
Santa Ana, CA 92704
714-825-3500

Santa Barbara
4440 Calle Real
Santa Barbara, CA 93110
805-683-1491

VA San Diego Healthcare System

Imperial Valley

Santa Maria
1550 East Main Street
Santa Maria, CA 93454
805-354-6000

Sepulveda
16111 Plummer Street
Sepulveda, CA 91343
818-891-7711

Sun City
28125 Bradley Rd., Ste. 130
Sun City, CA 92586
951-672-1931

Victorville
12138 Industrial Blvd., Ste. 120
Victorville, CA 92392
760-951-2599

Vista
1840 West Drive
Vista, CA 92083
760-643-2000

Whittier/Santa Fe Springs
10210 Orr and Day Road
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670
562-466-6080