

# Veterans' Health Today

WINTER 2011

## Integrated Ethics Model

A Common Cold, or Whooping Cough?

PACT: Patient Aligned Care Team

VA DESERT PACIFIC  
HEALTHCARE NETWORK



 Department of  
Veterans Affairs





# Integrated **Ethics** Model

**VA** is a leader in quality and organizational change. The VA took on the challenge to be a leader in promoting ethical practices within health care. In 2008, the VA rolled out a complete ethics model to improve ethical practices in health care. This program is called IntegratedEthics (IE).

Denise Wishner, IntegratedEthics Program Officer and Ethics Consultation Coordinator at VA Long Beach Healthcare System, describes IE this way: “Envision the canopy of a large tree – that is IE. This tree has three main branches: Ethics Consultation, Preventive Ethics and Ethical Leadership.”

- **Ethics Consultation** is the branch that our Veterans and their families would most likely contact if they should need help with conflicts and values in health care decision-making.
- **Preventive Ethics** is the branch that focuses on the quality of ethics at the system or organizational level.
- **Ethical Leadership** is the branch of IE that focuses on fostering an ethical environment and culture.

A system-wide approach means that ethics quality can be seen in all patient care areas. Ms. Wishner points out, “Most Veterans and patients will usually only see ethics in action in the hospital setting. It is seen most often in the intensive care areas. But it is important to know that ethics is ongoing behind the scenes throughout the health care facility. Ethics issues are discussed in the board rooms, in committee meetings in policy creation and in education at all levels of health care at the VA.”

IE focuses on decision-making in the health care setting. This is where patients, families and health

professionals often face difficult decisions about medical treatments and patient care. These decisions may involve moral values, religious beliefs or professional duties and guidelines.

IE offers you ways to make good choices. Ethical questions and concerns arise when the right thing to do may not be clear, or when there are disagreements about what is best for you. VA hospitals offer ethic consultations to assist you as a patient, your family and your health professionals in decision-making. Your consultant is available to identify, study and resolve specific ethical questions or issues through information-gathering, education and talking with you, your health professional and your family. In addition, he/she may offer advice, make recommendations and identify ethically supportable options. However, they do not make decisions for you or others involved. You, your family members and your primary care provider can decide whether or not to follow the recommendations.

“We would like all Veteran patients to share with us who they want to be their health care decision-maker, should they not be able to decide for themselves,” states Ms. Wishner. This information can be given to the patient’s health care provider, or to a social worker who can enter a note into their electronic medical record.

Ms. Wishner stresses, “All Veterans should feel very good about the quality of the ethics consultants in the VA healthcare systems. The VA has trained and given their ethics consultants the tools they need to give the very best information to our patients.”

Check with your local facility for more information regarding IntegratedEthics.

# Diabetes

## Management and Prevention

**D**iabetes is a disease marked by high levels of blood sugar which can lead to serious complications. However, treatment and preventive measures can greatly reduce the likelihood of complications.

### Symptoms of untreated diabetes include:

- › Frequent urination
- › Unusual thirst and/or hunger
- › Weight loss
- › Excessive fatigue
- › Irritability
- › Frequent or recurrent infections
- › Slow healing of injuries
- › Blurred vision
- › Tingling or numbness in the hands and/or feet

If you experience symptoms of diabetes, you should seek professional medical care immediately. Diabetes is associated with long-term complications that affect almost every part of the body, including peripheral vascular disease, limb amputation, kidney damage, nerve damage and blindness. Those with diabetes are also at high risk for cardiovascular disease. In fact, at least 65 percent of those with diabetes die from heart disease or stroke.

Managing diabetes is more than keeping blood glucose levels under control—it is also important to manage blood pressure and cholesterol levels through healthy eating, physical activity, and use of medications, if needed. By doing so, individuals with diabetes can lower their risk and improve quality of life.

Many people avoid long-term problems of diabetes by taking good care of themselves. You can work with your health care team and follow these steps in order to have better control of your diabetes:

- › Eat healthy foods
- › Get plenty of physical activity
- › Stay at a healthy weight
- › Ask for help if you feel down
- › Learn to cope with stress



- › Stop smoking
- › Take prescribed medications, even when feeling well
- › Check your blood pressure regularly and aim to reduce it below 140/90
- › Check your blood glucose regularly and aim for:
  - HbA1c less than 7
  - LDL-C less than 100mg/Dl

You can also reduce your risk of developing diabetes by losing weight if you are overweight. Even losing five percent of your body weight can help to delay or even stop you from having type 2 diabetes. For helpful tips on losing weight, visit *Move!*, the weight management program for Veterans at [www.move.va.gov](http://www.move.va.gov).

The VA can help Veterans fight diabetes. Recent studies revealed that the VA excels in diabetes care compared with other health care organizations—scoring 13 percent higher than the national sample. MyHealthVet is a free, online VA program to educate Veterans about health care topics, including diabetes, and allows everyone to track their care. The program can be found at [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov). The VA's goal is to prevent diabetes and diabetes-related complications with management programs that keep blood sugar or glucose levels close to a normal range through diet, exercise and medication management.



# PACT

## Patient Aligned Care Team

---

enefit of the PACT is that you always have a primary care provider working with a team of health professionals. This team's job is to make sure that the best person is available to meet your healthcare needs in a timely manner.

PACT will lead to easier access to your primary care physician, with better access and shorter wait times for other types of care when it is not necessary to have the primary care physician directly involved.

PACT is **patient-driven** care that focuses on the person rather than the condition. It starts a partnership among your primary care team, you, your family and caregivers. Your wants and needs are respected. Your care team looks at all areas of your health. It stresses prevention and health promotion.

This model of healthcare is also **team-based**. Each Veteran team includes their primary care provider, RN case manager, clinical and administrative staff, as well as other clinical services necessary to meet the health goals and needs of the Veteran. *You* are the key team member.

Technology will be used to **efficiently** support the best possible patient care, patient education and better communication. This allows you to receive appropriate care at the moment you need it. PACT also offers many ways to access health care. In addition to personal visits with your primary provider, you can schedule visits with other members of your team. You also may have access to group clinics and a wealth of information on the Internet through MyHealthVet ([www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)). And coming soon, you will be able to have visits with members of your PACT by telephone or through secure messaging via MyHealthVet.

The primary care team uses education, preventive care services, lifestyle coaching, and early detection

**T**here is a new term floating around VA Healthcare Systems that will be heard more and more as we progress into 2011: Patient Aligned Care Team, commonly referred to as PACT.

PACT is designed around the patient-centered care model. According to Dr. Timothy Dresselhaus, VA San Diego Healthcare System, "A PACT serves the immediate needs of Veterans by engaging them in their own care." With the PACT model, each patient has a team of physicians, nurses, pharmacists, nutritionists, therapists and other health care providers working together with the patient to plan for whole-person care as well as their life-long health and wellness.

Dr. Dresselhaus explains, "The integral part of fulfilling these principles is engaging the Veteran as the center member of the team, with a group of professionals surrounding them for their comprehensive care." The ben-

screenings to give whole-person care. **Comprehensive** care addresses all medical, behavioral, and psychosocial issues. All issues are first addressed by your primary care provider, as they are able to manage most of these needs. The PACT also looks to the community as a resource, understanding the importance of where you live, your exposures, experiences and special risks in your area. The team uses this greater understanding of individual differences within each population to deliver care.

In the PACT model, it is very important for you and your medical professionals to have a **continuous** relationship. The primary care provider directs the entire team that is responsible for delivering your health care needs and for arranging care with other qualified professionals, when needed.

The **communication** between you and other team members is honest, respectful, reliable and culturally sensitive. Healthcare providers encourage you to offer truthful communication without the fear of judgment. This type

The primary care team, **with your partnership**, develops a plan for care that is given through **coordination** across all areas of the health care system. **This allows you to make informed choices** and get the agreed upon care when and where you need and want it.



## What is a PACT?

A Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) is each Veteran working together with health care professionals to plan for whole-person care and life-long health and wellness.

They focus on:

- **Partnerships** with Veterans
- **Access** to care using diverse methods
- **Coordinated care** among team members
- **Team-based care** with Veterans as the center of their PACT

of communication allows for all team members to make personal, informed health care decisions.

The primary care team, with your partnership, develops a plan for care that is given through **coordination** across all areas of the health care system. This allows you to make informed choices and get the agreed upon care when and where you need and want it. Information from many different places is pulled together into a single system supporting your information. All members of your team have clearly defined roles. They meet often to talk with you and each other about your progress toward making your health goals. The focus is on building trusted personal relationships.

Your primary care team can be described as two parts: the core team and the expanded team. Your core team consists of your primary provider, a RN care manager, a clinical staff assistant and administrative staff members who are responsible for the central functions of your medical care. The core team will work with other medical and support staff to meet your needs. Expanded team members will be on site from time to time. Consultants may work remotely from the core team and provide help when needed. The core team will manage these consultations in order to provide coordinated care and provide smooth transitions between the many areas of the health care system.

VA Healthcare Systems around the country are starting programs that support PACT by hiring new staff and changing their programs around the PACT concept. Dr. Dresselhaus reminds us that this concept is in the first stages and will involve ongoing changes. "In the days ahead, we hope Veterans will recognize changes that make primary care more responsive to their care needs."



## A COMMON COLD, OR **Whooping Cough?**

**W**e are in cold and flu season, but there is something else to watch out for—whooping cough (also known as pertussis). Whooping cough starts with mild, cold-like upper respiratory symptoms. This is typically followed by an uncontrollable, violent cough followed by a deep “whooping” sound when inhaling. Whooping cough can last for several weeks and may be so severe you can experience pain in your ribs.

Whooping cough spreads easily from one person to another. Although whooping cough is often considered a childhood disease, cases can also occur in adults, which adults can possibly spread to vulnerable children. The best way to prevent whooping cough is by receiving the Tdap vaccination. For adults, this is a once-in-a-lifetime dose that also protects against tetanus and diphtheria. According to Dr. David Webb, Chief of Environmental Medicine at VA Long Beach Healthcare System, “California is now experiencing an epidemic of whooping cough. There have been over 6,400 confirmed cases and 10 deaths from whooping cough in 2010. This is the highest rate in over

60 years.” For this reason, the State of California is recommending that all children and adults be vaccinated.

The best way to ensure that you do not spread whooping cough, or other respiratory infections, is by frequent and proper hand-washing. Dr. Webb stresses that you should *never* cough into your hand. “That’s the biggest mistake people make,” he says. “When you cough or sneeze, you should do it into a tissue and then throw it away.” Dr. Webb also recommends coughing into your sleeve, using alcohol-based hand sanitizer after coughing or sneezing and avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth as germs enter your body this way. If you become sick, stay home and get as much rest as possible.

For those who succumb to the infection, do not despair! Whooping cough is easily treated with antibiotics, such as azithromycin. However, symptoms of whooping cough are very similar to cold and flu symptoms, with severe cases leading to pneumonia. Dr. Webb also recommends that everyone receive a flu shot, and those 65 and older or anyone with a chronic disease should receive a pneumonia vaccination as well.

If you are suffering from cold, flu or whooping cough symptoms, Dr. Webb reminds Veterans that the VA provides places where you can receive helpful advice. “We offer a 24/7 toll-free number patients can call to get advice from nurses,” says Dr. Webb. “You can call and get answers to questions about your symptoms. They can give you advice on self-treatment or when to seek care at a VA medical center.”

## **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.



# Little Blue Button, BIG Benefit for Veterans

**W**e live in a society where a lot is possible with just a click of a button. Thanks to the Internet, a world of information is readily available and easily accessible. And now, VA is using this concept to make your personal health information just as accessible — with the click of a little blue button.

In 2010, the “Blue Button” project was announced by President Obama as a new ehealth initiative. Created as a feature of MyHealthVet, the button allows Veterans to download, save and print their Personal Health Record (PHR). A Veterans’ PHR includes health information Veterans have entered into their MyHealthVet account and VA Electronic Health Record, such as blood pressure, weight, prescriptions and health history.

The PHR is generated in a simple, easy-to-read text format, allowing MyHealthVet users to download their PHR anywhere Internet access is available. View a sample of a downloaded PHR at [www4.va.gov/BLUEBUTTON/docs/sample\\_file.txt](http://www4.va.gov/BLUEBUTTON/docs/sample_file.txt). Whether sharing your current needs or past medical history, keeping a report of personal



## Blue Button Download My Data

health information at your fingertips can help you to more effectively communicate with your health care providers and caregivers. Use the Blue Button to:

- Print records for a visit with a new doctor
- Save your PHR for your records at home
- View to manage your appointments and medications.

Although the Blue Button is safe and secure, remember to protect your privacy and personal information. Don’t save the information on a shared or public computer, and don’t leave printouts lying around or in a printer.

Try the Blue Button for yourself by logging into MyHealthVet at [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov), and see how VA is working to help you take charge of your health care. Get connected!

## VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network Vet Centers

### Antelope Valley Vet Center

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

### Bakersfield Vet Center

2717 O Street  
Bakersfield, CA 93301  
661-323-8388

### Chula Vista Vet Center

180 Otay Lakes Road, Suite 108  
Bonita, CA 91902  
858-618-6534

### 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 140  
Commerce, CA 90022-5147  
323-728-9966

### Henderson Vet Center

400 North Stephanie Street, Ste. 180  
Henderson, NV 89014  
702-791-9100

### High Desert Vet Center

15095 Amargosa Rd., Suite 107  
Victorville, CA 92394  
760-261-5925

### 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., Ste. 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 150  
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 Dr., Ste. A & B  
Temecula, CA 92591  
951-302-4849

### 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

5901 E. 7th St.  
Long Beach, CA 90822

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](http://www.desertpacific.va.gov/publicaffairs.htm).  
Address changes should be sent to your local VA medical center.

PRSRT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
EFFINGHAM, IL  
PERMIT 714

# REACHING US IS EASY

**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 Loma Linda Healthcare System**  
★ VA Loma Linda Healthcare System

**VA Long Beach Healthcare System**  
★ VA Long Beach Healthcare System

**VA San Diego Healthcare System**  
★ VA San Diego Healthcare System

**Community-Based Outpatient Clinics**

**Anaheim**  
1801 W. Romneya Drive  
3rd Floor, Suite 304  
Anaheim, CA 92801  
714-780-5400

**Antelope Valley**  
547 W. Lancaster Blvd.  
Lancaster, CA 93534  
661-729-8655

**Bakersfield**  
1801 Westwind Drive  
Bakersfield, CA 93301  
661-632-1800

**Blythe Telehealth Clinic**  
205 N. 1st Street, Suite C  
Blythe, CA 92225  
760-619-4243

**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

**Imperial Valley**  
★ VA San Diego Healthcare System

**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

**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

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