



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER
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VHA's Office of Community Engagement and the
Center for Compassionate Care Innovation

SETTING THE STAGE FOR WHAT'S TO COME

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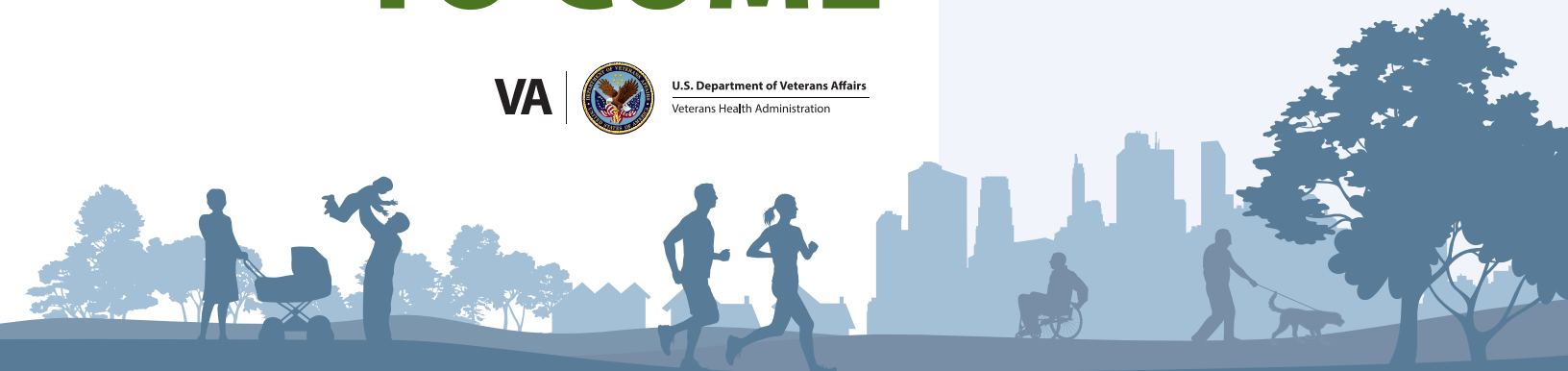
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VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration





A Note From The Acting Director

In this edition of our quarterly newsletter, we highlight new initiatives and success stories from the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA's) Office of Community Engagement (OCE) and Center for Compassionate Care Innovation (CCI).

The updates we are sharing with you are diverse and timely. June was PTSD Awareness Month, an initiative of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Center for PTSD. June 27 was the annual PTSD Awareness Day. These observances raise awareness of how posttraumatic stress disorder affects the Veteran community and how VHA is improving the quality of life of Veterans diagnosed with PTSD.

CCI is at the front lines of this important work; many of CCI's clinical demonstration projects focus on PTSD symptoms. Read on to learn how the program is helping to develop new and effective options for Veterans diagnosed with PTSD.

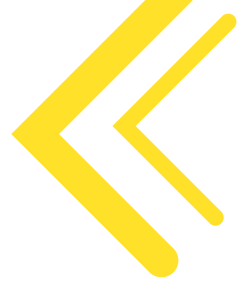
In addition, the winners of the 2019 VHA Community Partnership Challenge were announced in June. This contest highlights community partnerships between VHA and nongovernmental organizations that serve Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. This year's theme was **"Public Trust"** and three winners that exemplified specific elements of public trustworthiness were selected. Learn more about the winners and their partnerships in the VHA Community Partnership Challenge section.

Finally, we encourage you to check out the **"In Case You Missed It"** and **"Stay Tuned"** sections to read stories about other OCE partnerships and CCI projects and to learn where to find more information and updates. We hope you'll be just as enthusiastic as we are about the work OCE and CCI are doing to help Veterans.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tracy L. Weistreich

*Acting Director, Office of Community Engagement and
the Center for Compassionate Care Innovation*



CCI Innovations

CCI Fosters Development Of Promising Options For PTSD Symptoms

Living through a traumatic event may lead to chronic symptoms and PTSD for some Veterans. According to VA data, **the prevalence of PTSD among Veterans has ranged from 11% to 30%**, depending on the service era. As June was National PTSD Awareness Month, CCI is highlighting two treatments that may help Veterans with chronic, persistent PTSD symptoms: hyperbaric oxygen therapy and stellate ganglion block (SGB).

The SGB procedure and the positive effects it has had on Veterans were recently featured on an episode of “60 Minutes” on the CBS network. Watch the video at <https://cbsn.ws/2IMjLHL>.

CCI has also developed its own informational video about SGB, which can be viewed at <https://bcove.video/2GiMEsl>.

Read the full story, on our website, of how these clinical innovations work and how they are helping Veterans: <https://www.va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/updates.asp>.

For more information about CCI’s work, please visit <https://www.va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/CCIMission.asp>.

Expanding LED Therapy For Traumatic Brain Injury Symptoms

CCI and the VA Boston Health Care System are currently expanding the in-home use of light-emitting diode (LED) therapy for traumatic brain injury (TBI) symptoms. After a TBI, Veterans may experience symptoms such as depression, anxiety, memory problems, and trouble focusing, according to the VA National Center for PTSD. At-home LED treatment may help Veterans who struggle with these and other TBI symptoms.

During LED treatment, patients who have mild to moderate TBI, and who have reported symptoms consistent with TBI for six months or more, wear a lightweight headset affixed with LEDs. Evidence suggests that LED therapy promotes healing at the cellular level, due in part to increased blood flow. The diodes do not generate heat and the treatment is painless and noninvasive.

Each at-home session lasts only 25 minutes and takes place three times per week. Throughout the 12-week course of treatment, Veterans and clinicians communicate over the phone and through VA Telehealth Services. During these calls, clinicians ensure the Veteran is using the device properly, record treatment activity, and record the response to therapy in the medical record.

In 2018, CCI began collaborating with the VA Boston Healthcare System’s TBI clinic on a home-based LED clinical treatment program. Of the 59 Veterans who received the LED home treatment in 2018, 37 completed a 12-week follow-up



evaluation and the vast majority of those Veterans demonstrated improvement in two or more areas such as attention, mood, or sleep.

Earlier this month, the **TBI clinic scheduled its 100th Veteran for LED evaluation** and first treatment, a milestone for the program, said Dr. Yelena Bogdanova, clinic lead at the Boston TBI clinic. VA staff members report that Veterans who have the in-home LED devices use them consistently and that many Veterans enjoy the treatment and find it relaxing.

Some Veterans say they have **benefited more from LED treatment than from prescription medication**. Bringing LED services to more patients is a top priority for the Boston TBI team, said Lola Baird, the team's project coordinator. In September 2018, Ms. Baird presented on the LED project in Bedford, Massachusetts. Referrals from sites within the Veterans Integrated Services Network — the geographic region through which health care services are delivered — have arrived steadily since then.

The team is arranging additional presentations in New England this year. "This treatment option is considered low-risk and is a noninvasive and painless modality," Ms. Baird said. "Every Veteran receiving this treatment is paired with experienced, professional, and compassionate providers who are committed to allowing every eligible and appropriate Veteran [to] have access to this care."

To receive LED therapy, Veterans in New England may be referred by their VA providers or may contact the Boston TBI clinic directly to discuss treatment and eligibility. The clinic can also schedule follow-up appointments using VA Video Connect, which facilitates secure and private remote sessions. For more information on CCI's work, visit <https://www.va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/CCIMMISSION.asp>.

Announcing The Winners Of The 2019 VHA Community Partnership Challenge!

After receiving more than 40 entries from VA personnel all over the country, OCE is pleased to announce the 2019 VHA Community Partnership Challenge winners!

This annual contest recognizes three VA medical centers and partnerships that best exemplify the contest's theme; this year's theme is "Public Trust." Partnerships that exemplify public trustworthiness are those that are Veteran-centered, accountable, consistent, safe, and transparent. Groups that submitted to the contest were tasked with demonstrating how their partnerships benefit Veterans and advance VA's mission by addressing one or more of those five elements.

Following review and much deliberation among 10 judges representing many VA offices, the winners are the **Central Texas Health Care System (CTHCS)**, in partnership with the Salvation Army; **James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital**, in partnership with the American Cancer Society (ACS); and the **VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System**, in partnership with Helmets to Hardhats.

CTHCS, in its partnership with the Salvation Army, aims to increase food security among Veterans, their families, and members of the community in Waco and Temple, Texas. The James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa, Florida, has partnered with ACS to provide Veterans with coaching, education, and resources regarding their cancer treatment plans. The VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System in Michigan and Ohio has partnered with the Helmets to Hardhats organization to provide justice-involved Veterans with opportunities for continuing their mental health care treatment, as well as training or employment in skilled trades.

Winning facilities were honored at an awards ceremony on Thursday, June 13. At the ceremony,

attendees heard remarks from VHA Chief of Staff Lawrence B. Connell and Renee Oshinski, deputy under secretary for health for operations and management, and the winning facilities received the Under Secretary for Health's award.

VHA and OCE are honored and excited to recognize these winners and want to commend all who have developed transformative partnerships.

Stay tuned to VA Pulse, VA Insider, and VAntage Point for photographs and a full recap of the ceremony, as well as information on other fantastic submissions to the contest that were considered for the winning spots.

For more information on the VHA Community Partnership Challenge winners, visit <https://www.va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/updates.asp>.

Stay Tuned

We are always excited to highlight VHA-partner collaborations that provide Veterans access to high-quality care. For more OCE and CCI highlights and updates, please visit our website — www.va.gov/healthpartnerships. Also, stay on the lookout for our upcoming **#BeBoldForVets** hashtag initiative that will highlight partnerships and clinical innovations. We hope that you will use it to bring awareness to the great work you are doing to help Veterans in your community.



In Case You Missed It

In case you missed these stories and announcements about OCE and CCI's work, **check out:**

- 1. The U.S. is in the midst of an opioid epidemic.** There were more than 47,000 overdose deaths involving opioids in the U.S. in 2017. A new partnership between VHA and Cigna, a health services company, is designed to make prescribing and using opioids safer. Read more: <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/61236/vha-cigna-keep-veterans-opioid-safe-aware/>
- 2. Millions of people in the U.S., including many of the 4.7 million Veterans living in rural areas, lack a reliable broadband internet connection.** Without it, Veterans don't have as many opportunities to work, learn, access information, and communicate. In partnership with Microsoft Corp., VA will identify opportunities to improve Veterans' broadband internet connectivity in underserved rural communities. Read more: <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5258>
- 3. The Veterans enrolled in VA health care include 1.5 million Veterans diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes;** those Veterans have access to diet counseling, weight loss programs, and blood

glucose monitoring. A new partnership with Virta Health Corporation bring peer support and health coaching to some Veteran patients, adding to the services available to Veterans with Type 2 diabetes. Read more: <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/58037/innovative-treatment-vets-type-2-diabetes>

- 4.** To increase opportunities for education, recreation, and therapy for Veterans with mobility limitations, Microsoft and VA are working together to provide the Xbox Adaptive Controller — a video game controller designed for people with limited mobility — in select VA rehabilitation centers around the country. The partnership will provide controllers and services to Veterans as part of their therapeutic and rehabilitative activities, which work to challenge muscle activation and hand-eye coordination. The Adaptive Controller program also aims to increase Veterans' participation in social and recreational activities. Read more: <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/59625/xbox-adaptive-controller-helpingva-medical-centers-support-veterans/>