



LETTER FROM THE CHIEF

Alan Hirshberg, M.D., MPH, FACEP
Acting Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Health

Dear Colleagues,

I hope you're all enjoying the summer and taking some time to get outdoors, exercise, and absorb some Vitamin D, which our bodies need to build strong bones. Don't forget your sunscreen! While sunscreen blocks UVB light—the vehicle for absorption of Vitamin D—in practice most people do not apply sufficient amounts of sunscreen to block all UVB light. So, apply your SPF and enjoy the sunny days!

The VA Prevention Message for July is "Be Involved in Your Health Care." While all of us on Team ORE work for a health organization—that does not necessarily mean that we take the time to ensure that we are active participants in our own health care. As a physician, I have a bit of insight on some actions you can take to become informed, engaged, and involved in your health.

- First, inform yourself. While "Dr. Google" is not always a reliable source of information, becoming educated about health conditions you have been diagnosed with—and the pros and cons of various treatments for those conditions—is a smart way to engage in your own health.
- Know your family health history, and make sure your provider knows it, too. If you have a family history of conditions like kidney disease or cancer, your provider may encourage you to have more frequent screenings for those diseases.
- Before your medical appointments, write down your questions and concerns and bring them with you to the appointment. Doctors can seem to be in a hurry and that can make patients feel rushed. By bringing a list of what you'd like to discuss with your provider, you're less likely to forget something important. And if you do feel as if the doctor is not listening—or if you're having trouble understanding what your provider is saying—speak up!
- Always bring your provider a list of all of your medications,

IN THE JULY ISSUE

	Page
Letter from the Chief	1
New Leader Profile: Robert C. McMillan, Chief Audit Executive for Internal Audit	2
With Risk University, Teams Train Together to Improve Risk Management	2
Internal Audit helps program managers solve problems BEFORE they grow	3
Celebrate National Parks and Recreation Month in the Great Outdoors	4
Important Announcements: ORE Updates and Events	5
ORE Resources	6

This newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Veterans Health Administration Office of Oversight, Risk and Ethics (ORE).

Story ideas can be submitted to: oreteamdis@disconsulting.com.

including dosages. Don't forget to include over-the-counter medications like aspirin or Tylenol, as well as any vitamins and supplements you take.

- Stay on top of the screenings your doctor recommends. Check with your doctor if you think you're due for a colonoscopy, eye exam, or glucose screening test.

One of the most important ways you can be involved in your health is to exercise regularly. The summer makes outdoor exercise more appealing for some of us, and you can avoid the strong midsummer heat by exercising in the early morning or evening.

If you find exercise to be a chore, I encourage you to try walking or hiking in a beautiful spot. July is National Parks and Recreation Month—so now is a great time to integrate exercise with summer travel and sightseeing.

Enjoy the rest of your summer. I hope you enjoy this issue of *CONNECTION*.

NEW LEADER PROFILE: ROBERT C. MCMILLAN, CHIEF AUDIT EXECUTIVE FOR INTERNAL AUDIT

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR ROLE AS PART OF TEAM ORE

My current role within the Office of Oversight, Risk and Ethics (ORE) is the Chief Audit Executive of Internal Audit. The Chief Audit Executive for Internal Audit is the principal advisor to the Under Secretary for Health (USH) on matters pertaining to the administration of VHA's Internal Audit Program.

It is my honor to serve in this capacity with my VA senior executive colleagues, as well as my counterparts in the Office of Inspector General and Government Accountability Office.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR WORK AT VHA?

My favorite part of working at VHA is the opportunity to engage with executives, teams and staff with a pointed focus on how we can improve the delivery of care to Veterans through the lens of C.I.A.

C.I.A. is an acronym I coined that stands for Collaborative Independent Auditing.

When we use the lens of C.I.A. we are assuring that we stay committed to providing independent assurances that the policies, procedures, quality of care, data management, business processes, operations and controls are functioning as designed and as intended. This is key to ensuring that the end-to-end delivery of integrated care is meeting our VA Mission and Strategic Goals.

The best part of working at VHA is the opportunity to work collaboratively with people who are dedicated to and passionate about that mission.

JULY IS NATIONAL PARK AND RECREATION MONTH—AND GETTING OUTDOORS IS GREAT FOR YOUR HEALTH! CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT WHAT YOU LIKE TO DO OUTDOORS?

I like to chase a little ball when I get outdoors. Golfing is a great way to connect with nature and take time to be introspective. It also provides many lessons in competing with others—and with yourself—in an environment in which you have only partial control, and which challenges you to manage and maintain your emotions. Golf requires a great application of emotional intelligence and is a very humbling sport.

My favorite memory of golf is playing a par 3 hole, resulting in one stroke under par (a birdie) on the famous water hole at Renditions Golf Course. Golf parallels leadership in many ways, as both require you to keep swinging to reach success.

WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN TO SPEND YOUR CAREER SERVING VETERANS? IN OTHER WORDS, "WHAT'S YOUR WHY?"

My why is simple. I choose to serve Veterans because Veterans chose to serve me and my country. It is the least I can do as a token of my appreciation to all they have sacrificed.



WITH RISK UNIVERSITY, TEAMS TRAIN TOGETHER TO IMPROVE RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk University is a new, virtual training program launched by the Office of Integrity and Compliance (OIC) in conjunction with other risk-related program offices. This flexible, instructor-led virtual training program allows risk teams of 15 to 25 professionals from a single VHA program office, VISN or medical center to train in risk management together.

Staff in various roles within an office complete 10 practical, scenario-based modules tailored to the needs of their team. The instruction includes a comprehensive overview of risk management principles and how they connect to other

processes, such as governance and strategy. Because they're working together, staff can learn from each other's firsthand experiences with risk. At the training's end, participants walk away with toolkits and guided support from VHA OIC Risk Leaders to implement risk practices at their own facilities.

Risk University is timely, following significant changes in risk management across VHA in recent years. Just a few years ago, risk was tracked in spreadsheets and SharePoint lists with restricted access. Now, professionals throughout the enterprise play a role in managing risk. VHA uses a digital

WITH RISK UNIVERSITY, TEAMS TRAIN TOGETHER TO IMPROVE RISK MANAGEMENT

continued from page 2

portal and nationwide governance structure to universally track trends and make risk-informed decisions at every level.

Susan DuBay, a seasoned Integrity and Compliance Officer (ICO) at the Aleda E. Lutz VAMC, a facility within VISN10, has seen an increase in risk management responsibilities over her career. DuBay had the opportunity to attend a Risk University preliminary pilot program to review training materials, and said that Risk University is unlike any training she has done in the past.

“What we learned in Risk University will provide an opportunity for risk professionals to break down silos and collaborate better,” she said.

Attendee Jacob Davis said, “Risk is a much deeper topic than you might expect. Risk University gets into the nuts and bolts of understanding what risk is, understanding risk tolerances, mapping risks and tools like heat maps and graphs you

RISK UNIVERSITY

Manage Risk. Manage Results.

can use to assess your risk. It takes you from a surface-level understanding to a much deeper appreciation that is part of a bigger organization.”

OIC conducted the 9-week preliminary pilot this spring with 12 participants from various VISNs and program offices. This summer, OIC is running two comprehensive pilot Risk University programs, including all materials and sessions, at the Milwaukee VAMC and VISN 10 and anticipate open registration for cohorts in early FY23.

LEARN MORE:

More information on enrolling your risk team in Risk University will be released soon.

INTERNAL AUDIT HELPS PROGRAM MANAGERS SOLVE PROBLEMS BEFORE THEY GROW

The Office of Internal Audit (IA) plays a key role in helping VHA achieve its mission. By providing independent and objective assurance to continuously improve VHA operations, IA helps VHA employees strengthen the value, quality and reliability of VA health care—and gain Veterans’ trust. IA’s interdisciplinary team of health care professionals, auditors, data analysts and support staff work directly with program managers within medical centers, VISNs and program offices to achieve their goals. By actively providing independent assessments, the IA team helps VHA employees solve problems BEFORE they grow.

IMPORTANT WORK TO HELP PROVIDE BETTER, SAFER CARE FOR VETERANS

IA’s work across VHA supplements and complements the work of program office staff. IA helps program office staff who may not have the resources to support an audit by digging into areas of concern. Here are just a few examples.

Preventing delays in breast cancer care

IA examined Breast Cancer Screening programs run by VA and those run by community care providers. Through observation

and research, IA helped identify potential challenges that could cause delays in VA’s ability to achieve the full scope of care coordination. After identifying these issues, IA helped suggest solutions. Leaders and programs are currently implementing these recommendations to ensure that VA patients receive breast cancer screening and follow-up care as soon as they need it.

Reducing opioid addiction through pain management support

In response to legislation aimed at stemming the opioid crisis, VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) across the country established Pain Management Teams (PMTs). IA worked with VA Pain Management leads to develop and operationalize a plan. Together, the team conducted an audit and developed recommendations outlining the requirements to uniformly implement PMTs across the country.

As a result, funding was secured for PMTs in all VAMCs. The Pain Management program, Opioid Safety program, and Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PMOP), which supports healthcare providers and their patients in the safe

INTERNAL AUDIT HELPS PROGRAM MANAGERS SOLVE PROBLEMS BEFORE THEY GROW

continued from page 3

and effective use of prescription drugs, continue to close gaps. Together, these programs support Veterans and their families as they navigate the complex journey of pain management.

Improving documentation and record-keeping to prevent colon cancer

When National Gastroenterology and Hepatology Office (NGHO) staff noticed a troubling discrepancy between records for colonoscopy procedures from the community providers and those at VA health facilities, they contacted IA for help.

Through a comparison and review of more than 350

medical records, the IA team confirmed that there is a clear documentation data quality gap between VHA and community care providers. The record review showed community providers did not consistently record data when compared to VA records. Now, efforts to support more rigorous and standardized community provider data collection are underway.

Want to learn more about working with IA? Check out [this short video](#) or email us at VHA10IAInternalAuditAction@va.gov to see if IA can help your office.

CELEBRATE NATIONAL PARKS AND RECREATION MONTH IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Did you know that there are more than 84 million acres of wild landscapes and historic locations protected by the National Park Service?

Or that there are more than [400 national park sites](#) in the United States?

Each July we celebrate National Parks and Recreation Month—a time to get outside, enjoy nature’s beauty, and learn more about these protected sites.

First celebrated in 1985, the goal of National Parks and Recreation month is to raise awareness of the vital impact parks and recreation have on communities across the U.S. Access to parks provides a [connection to nature](#), which [studies](#) demonstrate relieves stress, strengthens interpersonal relationships and improves mental health. Participating in outdoor group activities may even have mental health [benefits](#) for Veterans.

From sandstone arches to rugged foothills and vast canyons, each national park boasts beauty within a unique experience. You can learn more about our nation’s most treasured places on the [National Parks website](#).

TRAVEL TIPS

National and state parks can be extremely busy during peak summer months. Be sure to [review these tips](#) before scheduling your next adventure:

1. Plan your visit in advance: After you’ve selected your destination, make sure you visit the park’s website to plan out your day, book any campsites, and have all the



Yosemite National Park

appropriate supplies for your itinerary—whether you plan on hiking, swimming, kayaking, etc.

- 2. Head to the park visitor center first:** This is where you’ll be able to access the latest maps and guides as well as up-to-the-minute information on everything from road conditions to hiking trails.
- 3. Be respectful of your environment:** Keep your distance from wild animals (never feed them!) and use special care to carry out or dispose of all trash and items you bring into a park.

Ready to plan your trip? Check out these resources to see if you and your family qualify:

CELEBRATE NATIONAL PARKS AND RECREATION MONTH IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

continued from page 4

- **Every Kid Outdoors:** [This federal public lands youth initiative](#) was launched to get all 4th graders and their families to experience the places that are home to our country's natural treasures, rich history, and vibrant culture. Every year, beginning on September 1, all 4th grade students have access to a free pass to visit national parks across the country.
- **NPS Junior Ranger Program:** This [free activity-based program](#) for youth ages 5 to 13 is conducted in almost all parks and even has an online option. Participants take an oath to protect parks, continue to learn about parks, and share their ranger story with friends and family.
- **The America the Beautiful – the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass (Interagency Pass) Program:** Veterans and Gold Star families get free entrance to national parks, refuges, and other public lands. Learn



Arches National Park

more about valid types of identification and find more details on the program in this [Vantage Point article](#).

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS: ORE UPDATES AND EVENTS

ORE TOWN HALL

ORE met for its third Town Hall of 2022 in late July. Led by Dr. Hirshberg, Acting VHA Associate Deputy Undersecretary for Health, Oversight, Risk and Ethics, ORE staff gathered to hear updates from the national program offices and a special update on VHA's Risk Management. As always, we took the time to celebrate new and outgoing colleagues, and the service milestones ORE staff have achieved here at VA. You can access the recording of this town hall in the [ORE SharePoint Site, Town Hall Folder](#).

Be on the lookout for the calendar invitation for the next Town Hall from [Alfreda Holmes](#).

BETTER TOGETHER CONVERSATIONS

We've covered a lot of ground in 2022 Better Together Conversations! Thank you to everyone who leads, attends, and participates in these BTC sessions.

Since April, we've featured a guest speaker from the VHA History Office, celebrated National Nurses Month and Military Appreciation Month in a session led by OMI, covered effective time management tools and strategies, and heard about the work of the VA's National Librarian. You can view the recordings from these sessions in the [ORE SharePoint site, Better Together Conversation folder](#).

If you haven't attended a session yet or are new to ORE, Better Together Conversations or BTC are informal themed conversations for ORE staff to learn new skills, share stories, tips and tricks, and get to know each other better. Our next session will take place on Wednesday, August 10. Watch your inbox for a calendar invitation from [Alfreda Holmes](#).

ORE RESOURCES

Check out the variety of tools and resources below, which are designed to streamline information sharing and improve ORE processes. If you have a project or tool you'd like to share, please email [Kelly O'Donnell](mailto:Kelly.O'Donnell).

- IA Resources
 - [Pain Management Case Study](#)
 - [IA FAQs](#)
 - White board video #1 - [VHA's Office of Internal Audit Helps Employees Address Those Monstrous Issues That Keep Them Up](#)
 - White board video #2 - [VHA's Office of Internal Audit Case Study of the Pain Management Team Audit](#)
- ORE leadership videos
 - [Office of Internal Audit](#)
 - [Office of Integrity and Compliance](#)
 - [National Center for Ethics in Health Care](#)
 - [Office of the Medical Inspector](#)
 - [Office of Research Oversight](#)
- [Enterprise Risk Management video](#)
- [Online Risk Appetite Quiz](#)
- [Choose Your Own Compliance Adventure tool](#)
- [Weekly Emails](#)
- [All Videos](#)
- [Intranet](#)
- [ORE SharePoint](#)

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration

VISIT US @ WWW.VA.GOV

CONTACT US



Thank you for reading *CONNECTION*. Have any ideas about how we can make the newsletter even better? Are there topics or individuals you want to hear more about? Send us an email: oreteamdis@disconsulting.com.