

Health *POWER!*

Prevention News • WINTER 2015



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TED SLOWIK, PH.D.

Chinese New Year arrives on February 19th, 2015—the “Year of the Ram” in Chinese astrology—and ushers in 2 weeks of celebrations in many Asian populations around the world. A traditional gift during this period is the “red envelope” (in Mandarin, *hóng bāo*), which contains money, typically in newly printed bills, to symbolize good fortune in the coming year. The denominations placed in a red envelope customarily start in certain even numbers, again to denote luck and prosperity. The number “8”, for example, is particularly auspicious because it sounds like the Mandarin word for wealth, and is often an amount used to fill the red envelopes given to friends and family.

So in keeping with the “lucky” numerology, this first issue of 2015 contains six items. Our feature story is about a Veteran who overcame devastating injury, with the help of

exceptional Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) care, to reclaim his health and sense of purpose in life. We also highlight how Veterans—and health promotion and disease prevention (HPDP) staff—are benefitting from the My HealtheVet HealthLiving Assessment at a local clinic in Minnesota. We include a story how local Veterans Health Administration (VHA) staff are using social media to promote our healthy living messages, and a final article about a VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Oklahoma that’s successfully promoting obesity awareness. We also provide an Updates section full of useful resources and news about our staff.

And finally, as we do in each newsletter, we include an Air Force Veteran’s story of impressive weight loss, better health, and improved outlook on life, which was all achieved through the MOVE!® Weight Management Program. And she lost a total of 246 pounds—there’s that lucky even number again.

So from all of us at the VHA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP), Happy Lunar New Year!

Ted Slowik

On a Bike, On a Mission: Overcoming Devastating Injury with VA Care, Veteran Larry Karlin Moves from Tragedy to Advocacy

May 8th, 2012, was the day that Larry Karlin's life changed forever.

"I'd just bought a new bike for my daughter," recalls the U.S. Army Veteran and Florida resident. "We were driving home, looking forward to a ride together, when it came loose." Re-racking the bike on the shoulder of the road, Larry was struck full-on, from behind, by a distracted driver. "I remember the thud, then lying there with crushed legs, barely conscious between the two totaled cars in the street, and seeing the blood and hearing the ambulances," Larry recounts. "When I opened my eyes 2 days later in the hospital, I thought I was in heaven—that I'd died."

DIFFICULT DECISION

But he hadn't. He was alive and in the North Broward Medical Center Intensive Care Unit, but in excruciating pain from severely damaged legs. Over the course of five surgeries, Dr. Peter Merkle worked valiantly to save Larry's life and legs. Reconstructive surgery was successful on his left leg, but he had to make a difficult choice on his critically injured right leg. "Dr. Merkle explained that I was facing multiple surgeries and grafts with a low chance of success, a high risk of ongoing infections, and many years of intensive therapy," Larry says. "So I decided to have my right leg amputated below the knee, because I wanted to get on with my life."

And so began Larry's long road to physical and psychological recovery—and eventually, a new sense of perspective and purpose in life.

PHENOMENAL CARE

After 70 days in the Broward hospital, Larry transferred to the West Palm Beach VAMC near his home. The months he spent there were a blur of surgeries, casts, pins, and plates. But he clearly remembers the "amazing" VA care he received as he slowly healed and began twice-daily physical therapy to regain his balance and leg use. "I served during the Vietnam Era but hadn't gotten any VA care before my crash. So I had no idea how excellent VA staff were," Larry explains. "I found them to be so caring and dedicated to providing me with the best care. I just knew they could help me get my life back."

BACK IN THE SADDLE

Before the crash, biking was something that had kept Larry going. He'd been a cyclist all of his life, and gotten even more serious about it in the past 15 years. "I have a family



Way beyond: Larry recovered with the "amazing" care of staff like Carmen Martinez (l) and Kristi Merinkers (r), Miami VA HCS



Daily therapy: Larry pauses during a long ride



Man up: Larry's surfing transformation

What obstacle? Larry gets amphibious at the 2014 National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic



history of early heart disease, so I started focusing on my health around age 50," he says. "I hiked on the Appalachian Trail and biked around France, for example, and put thousands of miles on my bike."

Reflecting on this formerly active life, Larry became convinced early in his recovery that cycling could help him chart a new future. "Even before I lost my leg, I set an important goal," he says. "I told myself that I would get back on a bike."

Larry continued to mend through 2012 at the West Palm Beach VA, and took initial, but problematic steps using a prosthetic in September 2012. A year later, he required additional surgery to attach a Taylor Spatial Frame to his left leg. After several painful months of daily adjustments, that frame was surgically removed, and by March 2014, Larry was moving around with a cane. But being back on a bike was always on his mind.

"On June 24th, 2014, I finally took my first bike ride and it was exciting," Larry recalls. "My muscles were atrophied, but luckily, there was no pain. I was most worried about my balance—I mean, I spent almost 20 months in a hospital bed!" A short time later, he felt comfortable enough to begin riding every day.

And he hasn't looked back since.

FAST FORWARD

Now, Larry bikes an average of 10 miles a day—over 700 miles total since June. He starts his day with a morning walk and some weight exercises. "But my day isn't complete without a long ride," he says. "Biking is great therapy!"

Larry notes that "getting back in the saddle" was due in large part to VA's state-of-the-art medical technology and Hugh Panton, C.P.O, a prosthetist at West Palm Beach. "Hugh's work was outstanding. He fashioned a pedal clip—specially tailored for my bike and leg—that has allowed me to ride even more than before," he explains. "And he also advocated for me to get my 'BIOM' or biomechanical ankle, which helped me walk again. I wasn't sure I could...then I took my first steps and was amazed!"

BRING IT ON

Another pivotal event in Larry's recovery was attending VA's National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic last September. Invited to attend the San Diego event for the first time, he was at first hesitant. "I'd never done things like surfing, kayaking, or sailing, and was unsure even about swimming again," he recalls. "But I made up my mind that I would try. I just said, 'bring it on!'" Larry literally dove in at the event, and it wasn't long before his perspective and outlook had changed again.

Seeing Veterans who were far more seriously injured than he was—and seeing what they were able to overcome and now do—was an eye-opener. And it gave Larry much needed confidence. "I went sailing with a blind Veteran, and just working with him and other Veterans was inspiring," he says. "I was scared about surfing, but it was a transformational activity for me. When I got back to shore after getting up on the board, I got emotional—it was a major personal accomplishment!"

Meeting and talking with fellow disabled Veterans at the Summer Clinic made him see that his injuries were comparably insignificant. "I realized that there are basically no obstacles for me," he recalls. "In fact, there's very little now that I feel I can't do." Larry says he's looking forward to participating in

the 2015 National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, and possibly helping at the next Summer Clinic, too. He's also excited to start a peer advisor certification course, which will allow him to provide support for other Veteran amputees at his local VA facility in Florida.

HIS SUCCESS, THEIR SUCCESS

As he does about VA caregivers, Larry raves about the Sports Clinic's supportive, enthusiastic volunteers and staff, calling them "phenomenal" and "way beyond" what he expected. "They were always asking, 'what can we do for you?'" he recounts. "My experience at the Clinic has mirrored my overall experience with VA."

Everyone he's met and worked with at VA—clinicians, aides, therapists, volunteers—has given him more than 100 percent. "They deserve so much praise," Larry says. "There are a lot of truly special people working here. Like Hugh and M.P.T. Mark Van Balveren at West Palm Beach, and Dr. Joseph Mensch, Occupational Therapist Kristi Merinkers, and Physical Therapist Carmen Martinez at the Miami VA Healthcare System (HCS). They all helped me so much that I knew I had to get better for them. I really believe that my success is their success!"

SAFETY ADVOCATE

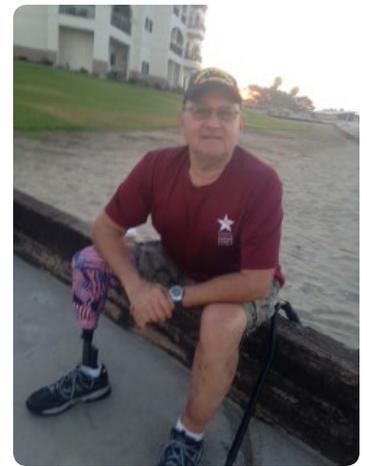
With his biking goal achieved, Larry has set his sights on a new mission—bringing awareness to the dangers of distracted driving and advocating for new laws to outlaw hand-held devices while driving. "We need to get both local and national attention on the tremendous toll that distracted driving is taking," he explains. "And more importantly, we need to get the attention of our elected leaders. They need to support legislation that addresses the increasing number of deaths and disabling injuries due to texting-related accidents."

Larry says that just like cycling, advocacy for this cause has now become an important part of his life. "Currently, I'm working with local police to speak to students and civic groups about the dangers of distracted driving," he says. "And I'm trying to get more involved in the political process to drive changes in the texting laws." Larry believes that current cell phone use laws are not nearly strong enough, and that there has to be more done in light of the startling rise in injuries like his.

WITHOUT LIMITATIONS

These days, Larry continues to ride and benefit from the help of his wonderful daughters and dedicated sister, whom he calls his "angel." He also continues to get monthly follow-up care from VA staff, who've become life-long friends. His long recovery has been continually challenging, often scary, and sometimes emotional. But Larry knows that he has a whole life in front of him, and can live it with hope.

He tells fellow Veterans, particularly those coping with debilitating injuries, to stay positive and "just do it." "I wrote on Facebook recently, 'You can't let fear stand in your way,'" he says. "I still thank God every day for the VA, and for allowing me to recover and hopefully inspire others. Take it from someone who knows—you can do more than you think, because the only limitations you have are the ones you create!"



No fear: Larry has the hope and confidence to move forward with life

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT VA'S NATIONAL VETERANS SUMMER SPORTS CLINIC, GO TO <http://www.va.gov/opa/speceven/ssc/index.asp>

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE VHA NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH PROMOTION AND DISEASE PREVENTION'S HEALTHY LIVING MESSAGES CAMPAIGN, WHICH ADDRESSES SAFETY, INCLUDING SAFE DRIVING, GO TO http://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/Be_Safe.asp

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON RECENT CHANGES TO FLORIDA'S TEXTING-WHILE-DRIVING LAWS, READ THIS RECENT FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL ARTICLE: <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/fl-texting-bills-filed-20141121-story.html> ★

Awareness, Accountability, and Action: HealthLiving Assessment Proves Effective for Patients and Providers at Bemidji CBOC

When R.N. Care Manager Deb Pierce first heard about the My Health^eVet Health^eLiving Assessment (HLA), she felt that it could help her communicate better with Veterans at the Bemidji (MN) Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) of the Fargo (ND) HCS. “We were working on improving our clinic’s secure messaging (SM) scores,” she says. “The HLA seemed like a great way to get Veterans to communicate more with us about their health.”

Months later, Pierce has recognized that enhanced communication is not the only thing that the HLA can facilitate. She’s found that it’s even more effective in providing Veterans—and their health care teams and caregivers—with the knowledge to understand and improve their overall health and lower their risk of disease.

REACHING OUT

Initially, Pierce focused on patients whom she thought would be interested in taking the HLA. “I sent them intriguing, personalized emails—‘want to find out your health age?’—that

explained what the HLA was, how it worked, and how it could help them,” she explains. “Later, after they’d completed their assessments, I had them send me their results via SM.” She reviewed each Veteran’s results, and then using HLA information, she provided each one with individualized feedback to improve health. In some cases, she even got Veterans to come to the clinic to review the HLA reports in person.

Almost immediately, Pierce saw the impact that the ‘health age’ feature and HLA reports had on individual patients.

DIARY

“We had a 78-year-old Veteran, for example, take the HLA and get a health age of 75,” she recounts. “He was so proud of his ‘score’ and ‘accomplishment.’” Another HLA user

told Pierce that he felt like he hadn’t learned anything because his real age and health age were the same. “But I was able to use his health age to start a conversation about his current health and lifestyle,” she recalls. “Afterwards, he was much more informed and receptive to making future changes.”

Pierce believes that the HLA is so valuable because it is like a “diary” of each patient’s health—essentially a record of his or her history, choices, and habits and an explanation of changes that will improve health. “Seeing their HLA results helps make them accountable for their actions and lifestyle,” she says. “Once they’re accountable, it’s much easier for them to make health changes. And the more information they have, the more they know how to change their health for the better.”



FOCUSED, ENGAGED

Now in her sixth year of VA service and third year as a full-time clinical staff member, Pierce believes that the HLA provides an opportunity for improving the health of Veterans at any health age and at all levels of relative health. And the HLA is another tool to help keep a focus on HPDP, and help build more effective relationships.

Pierce estimates that nearly 30 Veterans at the CBOC have expressed an interest in the HLA, and so far almost half have completed it. “Several have gotten lower health ages, but most have been near or above their actual ages,” she explains. “But even when a Veteran’s health age is lower, you can reinforce his or her healthy lifestyle, and talk about ways to reduce health age even more,” she says. “And the process of doing the HLA—calling them, discussing the results, planning to make changes, following up—helps the provider and patient stay invested and engaged in care.”

Pierce thinks that the HLA is an important resource for clinicians, too. “It makes them more aware of patients’ lifestyle and health, which can make it easier to provide them with patient-centered care,” she adds. “I recommend it to clinicians and staff in all VA facilities.”

PATIENT-CENTERED

Pierce has seen firsthand that the HLA is an effective way to reach Veterans both in and out of the clinic. “We communicate and consult with patients a lot via telephone, which promotes patient convenience,”



she says. “In this part of the upper Midwest, many of our Veterans drive 2 to 3 hours to get to our CBOC! So you can see the value that the HLA and SM can have in reaching out and providing care to these distant patients and their caregivers.”

But seeing patients in person is also important, and can be facilitated by the HLA, too. At the clinic, Pierce has been able to help some Veterans complete the assessment, and instruct others on how to take it. She says that this is important for the clinic’s population of Vietnam-era Veterans who are typically older and often find the computer less user friendly. “Our patients also enjoy the ‘atmosphere’ of our CBOC, and even prefer it to the larger hospital setting,” she explains. “Because many of our Veterans are distantly located and isolated, coming in to the clinic provides an important social connection—the turnout we get at our shared medical appointments, for example, is impressive.”

In the coming months, Pierce plans to continue to promote the HLA with both patients and colleagues at the clinic. “R.N. Alyssa Stenson, for example, provides an amazing knowledge base for everyone here and has been a great resource for the HLA. We have a very collaborative environment here in Bemidji, and we’re constantly bouncing ideas off each other on how to improve patient care,” she explains. “Several of us are very active—and competitive in a good way—in getting patients to use the HLA. It’s a great tool for promoting prevention and better health, and ensuring we offer Veteran-centered care. And it’s a resource I see us relying on more and more in the future.” ★



VA Butler (PA) Healthcare Promotes HPDP through Social Media

HPDP Program Manager Karen Dunn, M.S.N., R.N., discusses the value of using social media to promote prevention messages, services, and events at VA Butler (PA) Healthcare.

HOW ARE YOU USING SOCIAL MEDIA AT YOUR FACILITY?

“Our Public Affairs Officer (PAO), Amanda Kurtz, develops posts, links, and pictures for a weekly HPDP Note on Facebook and Twitter. These Health & Wellness Notes are posted on Wednesdays, and I usually base them on one of NCP’s Healthy Living Messages, an upcoming health observance, or a health and wellness program at the facility. I work closely with our PAO to develop the notes—I write the content and she edits them as needed. Our PAO also uses information provided by NCP, but sometimes writes her own. Social media is also frequently used to share HPDP-related photos and events from our facility.

Additionally, our PAO writes Web stories on HPDP-related topics and articles for our quarterly newsletter, Living Better, and a monthly news sheet called Front & Center, and shares them via social media. Social media complements the other ways we promote HPDP, which include an on-hold message system that features the Healthy Living Messages and electronic signage outside of the facility that features our Wellness Center and HPDP-related programming, such as the fitness classes.”

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THESE SOCIAL MEDIA EFFORTS?

“To inform and educate Veterans, their families, and the community about Butler’s programs and services, the Healthy Living Messages, and other health and wellness topics. Social media is a great way to get this information out to Veterans, and our social media pages are growing!”

HOW HAVE YOU BEEN MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA EFFORTS?

“We use a variety of ways to measure success—compiling the numbers of likes, comments, shares, re-tweets, and fans are most helpful. Our overall number of likes is over 1,000 on Facebook, and over 1,000 on Twitter! Also, we talk with staff, Veterans, and stakeholders to get feedback, and also to learn more about what topics to post on social media.”

ARE YOUR POSTS RESONATING WITH STAFF AND VETERANS?

“Yes, the feedback has been very positive! Photos from HPDP events that are shared on social media receive the most likes, shares, and comments.”

TO VIEW VA BUTLER (PA) HEALTHCARE’S WEEKLY HEALTH & WELLNESS, VISIT THE FACILITY’S FACEBOOK PAGE AT <https://www.facebook.com/events/255291017865644/?context=create#!/VAButlerPA/notes> ★

Health in Motion: Oklahoma MOVE!® Team Promotes Obesity Awareness

It's not often that a State Health Commissioner visits a MOVE!® Program class and walks the halls of a local VA clinic with Veterans. But that's precisely what happened on Sept. 2, 2014, when the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) MOVE!® Program held a "Wear Yellow-Fight Obesity Awareness" Walk at the Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic in Tulsa.

"In 2013, Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin proclaimed August as "Wear Yellow for Obesity/Childhood Obesity Awareness" Month, and we thought hosting a walk here would be a great way to raise awareness of obesity and our local MOVE!® Program," said Licensed Dietitian Melinda Smiley, JCMVAMC MOVE!® Program Coordinator. "Dr. Uma Koduri, a Primary Care Physician at our Tulsa clinic, has been really involved in promoting obesity awareness in the state, so she reached out to Dr. Terry Cline, State Health Commissioner, to visit the facility to help promote the cause and event."

TALK AND WALK

Prior to the September walk, Smiley and Koduri teamed up to hold several weight-management presentations at local schools, and in April 2014, debuted a "kick-off" obesity awareness walk. So they were particularly pleased when Dr. Cline accepted the invitation to visit the Tulsa clinic in September.

"He did a brief presentation, which emphasized eating more fruits and vegetables, limiting recreational screen time, getting more physical activity and avoiding sugary beverages," said Smiley. "He also praised our obesity awareness efforts and MOVE!® Program, and congratulated Veterans on better managing their weight and helping others to do the same."

After the presentation, Cline accompanied Tulsa staff and 58 MOVE!® Veterans as they walked almost a mile through the clinic's hallways. Dr. Thomas Schneider,



MUSKOGEE OBESITY WALK

Oklahoma State Health Commissioner Dr. Terry Cline (right, front) walks with a Veteran and VAMC Chief of Staff Dr. Thomas Schneider (center, rear)

JCMVAMC Chief of Staff, also participated and emphasized his continued advocacy for MOVE!® and his commitment to keep Veterans motivated to lose weight and improve their health.

The next day on Sept. 3, staff and Veterans at the Muskogee VA hospital also completed a similar walk.

ENCOURAGEMENT

“Veterans appreciated that the Commissioner and our Chief of Staff made the effort to come out and support them,” said Smiley. “It meant a lot that someone from the Governor’s Office was talking with them and providing that encouragement.”

Overall, Smiley feels the event was a success because it demonstrated to Veterans that they have VA’s support to manage their weight, and that what they’re doing to better their health is worthwhile. This support and focus resonates with Muskogee’s primarily older, and rural patients, as well as the younger, working Operation Enduring Freedom/ Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans who comprise the Tulsa population.

“Staff feedback on the walks has also been positive,” said Smiley. “They love the concept and actually want us to do it more frequently.”

MOMENTUM

Smiley said JCMVAMC is committed to keeping the “momentum” going on their obesity awareness and healthy living promotional efforts. “In December, we did another walk at our Tulsa Clinic and even staff participated, which was great,” she said. “Our other facilities are also doing more walks, and there has been increasing interest from others in what we’re doing.” In early 2015, the MOVE!® Program will hold another “Yellow Out” and Veterans and VA staff will be encouraged to again wear yellow and walk to promote obesity awareness.

“We’ll continue our efforts to encourage people to get walking and get the word out about obesity prevention and MOVE!,” explained Smiley. “The program is a great way to help them avoid becoming overweight, and stay on the path to a healthier lifestyle.” ★

What They’re Saying About

HealthPOWER!

“I enjoy the newsletter, and I use it as an advertising and awareness tool for the HPDP program at our facility. I often do this by printing a few hard copies and leaving them in reading areas for staff.”

— Kathy P. Kurfman, Ph.D., HSPP, Health Behavior Coordinator/Psychologist, Smoking & Tobacco Use Cessation Lead Clinician, VA Northern Indiana HCS —

“I print out HealthPOWER! for our Veterans Health Education committee and for our HPDP quarterly meeting. It always has great info!”

— Veterans Health Education Coordinator in Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 22 —

“Emailing the newsletter with hyperlinks to individual stories is great...I can quickly scan the topics and click for the article, thanks!”

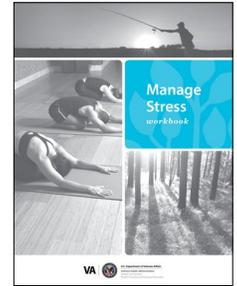
— MOVE!® Coordinator in VISN 12 —

Several articles of interest to VHA clinicians were published:

- "How to Stop the Overconsumption of Health Care," Kerr EA, Ayanian JZ. *Harvard Bus Rev.* Published December 11, 2014
- "Association Between Dietary Whole Grain Intake and Risk of Mortality: Two Large Prospective Studies in US Men and Women." Wu H, Flint AJ, Qi Q, et al. *JAMA Intern Med.* Published online January 5, 2015
- "American Society of Clinical Oncology Position Statement on Obesity and Cancer," Ligibel JA, Alfano CM, Courneya KS, et al. *J Clin Oncol.* Published online October 1, 2014
- "Korea's Thyroid-Cancer "Epidemic" — Screening and Overdiagnosis," Ahn HS, Kim HJ, Welch HG. *N Engl J Med.* 2014;371(19):1765-1767
- "Healthy Lifestyle Habits and Mortality in Overweight and Obese Individuals," Matheson EM, King DE, Everett CJ. *J Am Board Fam Med.* 2012;25:9-15
- "Who Determines Physician Effectiveness?," Hershberger PJ, Bricker DA. *JAMA.* Published online October 13, 2014
- "Surveillance for Certain Health Behaviors Among States and Selected Local Areas—Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, United States, 2011," Xu F, Mawokomatanda T, Flegel D, et al. *MMWR.* 2014;63(SS-9):1-149
- "Material Need Insecurities, Control of Diabetes Mellitus, and Use of Health Care Resources: Results of the Measuring Economic Insecurity in Diabetes Study," Berkowitz SA, Meigs JB, DeWalt D, et al. *JAMA Intern Med.* Published online December 29, 2014
- "Patient, Heal Thyself: 'The Patient Will See You Now' Envisions a New Era of Digitally Perfected Care," Zuger A. *The New York Times.* Published online January 5, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/06/science/the-patient-will-see-you-now-envisions-a-new-era-of-digitally-perfected-care.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Ar%2C%7B%22%22%3A%22RI%3A15%22%7D&_r=0
- "Association between Bariatric Surgery and Long-Term Survival." Arterburn D, Olsen M, Smith V, et al. *JAMA.* 2015;313(1):62-70
- "Breast Cancer Screening: Benefits and Harms." *Jin J. JAMA.* 2014;312(23):2585
- "Building the Evidence Base for Complementary and Integrative Medicine Use among Veterans and Military Personnel." *Medical Care.* December 2014;52(12, Supplement 5)
- "Partnered Research." *J Gen Int Med.* November 2014;29(4 Suppl)
- "The Effects of Shared Decision Making on Cancer Screening — A Systematic Review." Lillie SE, Partin MR, Rice K, et al. *VA ESP Project #09-009; 2014.* <http://vaww.hsrd.research.va.gov/publications/esf/shareddecision.cfm>

A toolkit for promoting NCP's Healthy Living message, Manage Stress,

was recently distributed for patients and clinicians, and can be found at http://www.prevention.va.gov/MPT/2014/December_2014.asp. It contains several resources such as videos, a workbook, handouts and links:



- **Stress Management Whiteboard**—YouTube Version—Other video formats for facility waiting rooms are located here
- **Manage Stress Workbook**—For patients
- **Managing Stress Healthy Living message handout**—For patients
- http://www.prevention.va.gov/Recordings/ShortBreathing_McManus.mp3—For your patients
- <http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/>—For staff and patients

The *Manage Stress Workbook* is expected to soon be available through the Depot. It is available now on the Internet and Intranet, as well as on PULSE (www.vapulse.net). If you have any questions about these stress management resources, please contact Peg Dundon at Margaret.Dundon@va.gov or (716) 604-5446.

VHA's Office of Public Health recently developed **14 new fact-sheets and posters in Spanish from VA's Infection: Don't Pass It On Campaign:** <https://vaww.vha.vaco.portal.va.gov/sites/PublicHealth/handhygiene/New%20Posters%20%20Resources/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2Fsites%2FPublicHealth%2Fhandhygiene%2FNew%20Posters%20%20Resources%2Fspanish%20Language%20Resources&FolderCTID=0x0120008A6F461077D34E46B3EEC5C8DEF86A26&View={2DEE7DF0-0DF1-4BF1-B73B-B6442A806B6C}>

Additional flu vaccine resources from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Immunization Action Coalition (IAC) include:

- *CDC's Seasonal Flu web section*
- *CDC's Flu View web section*
- *CDC's Free Resources* related to influenza
- Influenza Web page on immunize.org
- IAC's *handouts* related to influenza
- IAC's October 2014 issue of *Vaccinate Adults*

NCP has created several **Veteran-specific Healthy Living message videos**, which use a “white board” format, run from 2–3 minutes, and detail VHA resources. See NCP’s Intranet page for links to these videos at: http://vaww.prevention.va.gov/HPDP_Patient_and_Staff_Educational_Materials.asp

The **Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF)** recently published a summary of the systematic review that led to their recommendation to offer programs that **promote healthy diet and physical activity to patients with “prediabetes”**

CPSTF also recently updated their **What Works: Skin Cancer Fact Sheet** and **insert** to include the new recommendations. For more information about **recommendations on community-based skin cancer prevention interventions** that work, please see CPSTF’s **News & Announcements** feature.

VHA Women’s Health Services is now offering a VA Goes Red Toolkit. This 2015 planning and resource toolkit provides information on how to plan your own *VA Goes Red* event (including modifiable templates), how to connect with regional American Heart Association (AHA) affiliates, links to AHA, and VA resources for care teams and patients. Toolkit files are located at: <http://vaww.infoshare.va.gov/sites/womenshealth/gored/SitePages/Go%20Red%20Home%20Page.aspx>, on the right side navigation bar and on the left side navigation bar under *VA Goes Red Toolkit Files*. The *VA Goes Red Planning Toolkit 2015.pptx* slide deck walks you through the planning process and toolkit hub. You can also sign up for a January 2015 virtual tour of the toolkit and hub.

For questions about VA Goes Red, please contact Alison Whitehead (Alison.Whitehead@va.gov).

The infographic features a light blue background with faint illustrations of a woman and a man in a consultation. The woman has a thought bubble that says "I NEED TO TAKE BETTER OF M...". The man has a thought bubble that says "MY HEALTH AGE IS 10 YEARS OLDER?". In the center, there is a white box with the text "by the numbers:". Below this, the logo for "My healthvet" (with three stars) and "healthliving assessment" is displayed. The main text reads: "Through early January 2014, over 20,000 HLA assessments have been completed." There are also faint images of a calendar showing "WED 12" and "THU 13", and a laptop displaying "65".

by the numbers:

My healthvet healthliving assessment

**Through early January 2014,
over 20,000 HLA assessments
have been completed.**

Staff Updates

AN EVALUATION OF NCP'S RECENTLY COMPLETED TELEPHONE LIFESTYLE COACHING (TLC) PILOT culminated in the **presentation at the November 2014 annual meeting of *The Obesity Society and The American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery***. Titled, "The Veterans Health Administration Telephone Lifestyle Coaching Pilot for Weight Loss: Treatment Engagement and Outcomes," the abstract focused on participant engagement in the weight management intervention of the multi-year, multi-site pilot. Authored by Terry Bush and Kelly Carpenter (Alere Wellbeing), Jennifer Lovejoy (University of Washington School of Public Health, Seattle), and **NCP's Sophia Hurley, Dr. Rachel Urrutia** (University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill), **Trang Lance**, and **Dr. Linda Kinsinger**, the abstract was awarded a "Top Ten" in the meeting's Clinical Management Section.

RECENTLY, NCP VHEI STAFF, led by **Becky Hartt Minor**, collaborated with **AMVETS and The American Legion** and to promote the **Veterans Health Library (VHL)** through two informational publications. AMVETS' Fall 2014 issue of American Veteran included an article (<http://pubs.royle.com/publication/?m=21771&! =1>) on the VHL, as did the December 2014 newsletter of The American Legion. NCP is also now working to link these Veterans Service Organizations' Web pages with that of the VHL, which will enhance Veteran access to this important resource.



SOPHIA ("SOPHIE") CALIFANO, M.D., is our current resident from the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill (UNC) Preventive Medicine Residency (PMR) Program. Sophie is a second-year resident who completed her Infectious Diseases fellowship, also at UNC, in July after finishing residency

and chief residency at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. She is originally from Rhode Island, received her undergraduate degree from Indiana University, and went to medical school in a combined program through Dartmouth College and Brown University. Her main interest is in keeping people healthy, with a particular focus on preventable infections and on populations who have poor access to quality preventive care, education, and health resources. She enjoyed working with Veterans in both medical school and residency, and hopes to do both clinical work (adult general medicine) and public health work (general medicine and infectious diseases) for the VA after finishing her training.

DR. JANE KIM will present a poster at the late February annual meeting of the American College of Preventive Medicine. Titled, "A Pilot Telephone Lifestyle Coaching Program for Veterans Improves Multiple Health Behaviors", and co-authored by **UNC PMR Dr. Rachel Urrutia, and NCP staff Sophia Hurley, Trang Lance, Dr. Michael Goldstein, Dr. Peg Dundon, Sue Diamond, and Dr. Linda Kinsinger**, the presentation will cover the overall design, structure, and main results from NCP's recently completed National TLC Pilot.

Keeping A Promise: MOVE!® Helps Veteran Dorothy Latson Get Accountable and Lose Over 45 Pounds

During her 23-year military career, Veteran Dorothy Latson felt constant stress about meeting military weight standards. “I struggled with it during my time in the Air Force,” she recalls. “I’d worry about annual fitness reviews and meeting the guidelines.” But although she never tried a recognized weight-loss program, she somehow managed to stay on the right side of the scale.

Upon retirement 11 years ago, Dorothy was relieved. “I didn’t have to watch my weight anymore, and I could eat whatever I wanted,” she says. She did, and just accepted the weight gain. However, she felt increasingly self-conscious about her size. Dorothy seldom looked in a mirror, and avoided being in photos . . . unless someone was standing in front of her.

READY TO RUN

In 2013, the principal at her daughter’s school started a running club. Dorothy encouraged her 10-year-old to participate, and made her a promise: together, they would run a 5K race at the end of the school year. “My daughter joined and started running at least twice a week,” Dorothy says. “I believe it’s important to keep promises. And I quickly realized that to keep my promise, I’d need to get ready!”

Fortunately, Dorothy’s primary care doctor at VA noticed that she had a weight problem, and asked if she’d consider joining the MOVE!® Program. “She left it totally up to me,” Dorothy says, “but I realized it would help me keep my promise. So I accepted, then talked my husband, who had diabetes, into doing it with me!”

THE NEXT LEVEL

Weighing almost 292 pounds in January 2014, Dorothy started MOVE!® at the Truman VA Hospital in Columbia, Missouri. Immediately, she realized that accountability was going to help her succeed. “At first, I kept a food journal—a real eye-opener for me—and exercised only because I felt I had to do it for the program,” she explains. “Over time, I actually started to enjoy it . . . and I became accountable to myself!”

As Dorothy started getting into the program more, she began to take her health to the next level. “I started exercising slowly, riding the stationary bike even though I’d get winded quickly,” she says. “I began to increase my physical activity on my own. Soon, I was exercising 5 or 6 times a week at the YMCA during my



daughter's swim lessons, instead of just waiting and reading." Dorothy's workouts got longer—from 15 minutes to over an hour—and included the bike, the elliptical machine, and strength training.

BETTER TOGETHER

By the spring of 2014, Dorothy was down to 246 pounds—a loss of over 45 pounds—and ready to keep her earlier promise. "That April, when I finished MOVE!®, my daughter and I completed a '1-month triathlon'—we swam a mile, biked 66 miles, and ran 13 miles during that time," she says proudly. "Since then, we've done 3 more 5k runs. I now even help coach the school's running club!"

At first, Dorothy did these things for her daughter. But now, she's doing it for herself and her family, who supported her the whole way. "We've taken up a healthier lifestyle together," she says. "Family outings are not centered on food anymore, and we don't eat out of boredom. We eat a lot better, keeping logs to watch our portion sizes and daily calorie. And we're running and walking 5k's as a family!"

NOT DONE YET

Since finishing MOVE!®, Dorothy has lost 5 more pounds. "I keep a journal, make healthy choices, and most importantly, stay physically active," she says. Weight loss has greatly improved her health and outlook. "I've got more energy, and am doing more with my family and friends. My blood sugar, cholesterol, and blood pressure are now normal," she reports. "I don't avoid looking in the mirror or being photographed—I've gone down two pants sizes!"

Dorothy urges other Veterans to try MOVE!®—and try it now! "Don't wait like I did," she exclaims. "I think about what I missed by not doing it sooner, like opportunities to be more involved in my daughter's life and do things for myself. Don't miss those opportunities—the MOVE!® Program makes you feel good!" ★



CALENDAR of EVENTS

NCP Education Conference Call

2nd Tuesday of the month

1:00 pm ET

1-800-767-1750, Access Code 18987#

• Upcoming calls—February 10, March 10

VISN/Facility MOVE!® Coordinators and Physician Champions Call

2nd Tuesday of the month

3:00 pm ET

1-800-767-1750, Access Code 59445#

• Upcoming calls—February 10, March 10

VISN MOVE!® Coordinators Call

2nd Tuesday of the third month of each quarter

3:00 pm ET

1-800-767-1750, Access Code 59445#

• Upcoming call—March 10

National Health Behavior Coordinators Call

2nd Wednesday of the month

12:00 pm ET

1-800-767-1750, Access Code 72899#

• Upcoming calls—February 11, March 11

Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Conference Call

1st Tuesday of the month

1:00 pm ET

1-800-767-1750, Access Code 35202#

• Upcoming calls—February 3, March 3

Veterans Health Education Hotline Call

4th Tuesday of the month

1:00 pm ET

1-800-767-1750, Access Code 16261#

• Upcoming calls—February 24, March 24

HealthPOWER! is an award-winning, quarterly publication from the VHA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, highlighting health promotion and disease prevention activities in VA.

Address suggestions, questions, and comments to the editorial staff:

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NCP MISSION

The VHA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP), a field-based office of the VHA Office of Patient Care Services, provides input to VHA leadership on evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention policy. NCP provides programs, education, and coordination for the field consistent with prevention policy to enhance the health, well-being, and quality of life for Veterans.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

Patient Care Services

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention