Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Nationally, about 30 percent of women and 1.5 percent of men have told their VA healthcare provider that they experienced Military Sexual Trauma (MST). This amounts to about 123,077 women and 73,619 men. At VA San Diego alone, we serve 3,365 Veterans who have experienced MST. Anonymous surveys suggest the number of victims is even higher than these VA statistics suggest.

In honor of Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month, VA San Diego is hosting a MST Clothesline Project, a visual display to raise awareness of MST. To ‘break the silence’ that can often surround these experiences, male and female Veterans are invited to decorate paper “t-shirts” in a way that reflects their experience of sexual trauma and recovery. Allies are also encouraged to write messages of support and hope. The shirts hang side-by-side to bring statistics to life and to allow others to bear witness.

The 2018 Clothesline Project will be displayed on Tuesday, April 24th on the first floor of Mission Valley Outpatient Clinic; Wednesday, April 25th in the Spinal Cord Injury Atrium at the La Jolla VA Medical Center; and Thursday, April 26 outside the front of the Oceanside Outpatient Clinic.

Chula Vista Groundbreaking

The future Chula Vista Clinic held their groundbreaking ceremony on Thursday, April 5, 2018 at 10:30 am. The new clinic will be located at 353 H Street at the corner of H Street and 3rd Avenue in Chula Vista and will replace the current clinic. The new building will be a two-story, build-to-suit facility consisting of 31,000-useable square feet which is three times the size of the current clinic. The new facility will offer convenient parking with 236 reserved and dedicated VA parking spaces. We will have expanded capacity for appointments and will continue to offer primary care, integrated mental health, laboratory and pathology, audiology, tele-medicine, optometry and podiatry with approximately 100 staff. The VA Chula Vista Clinic currently provides care to more than 9,000 Veterans living in the South Bay and had more than 30,690 visits in fiscal year 2017.
Women Veterans and Overdose Prevention

In 2016, more than 46 people died every day from overdoses involving prescription opioids. Today, 40% of all U.S. opioid overdose deaths involve a prescription opioid. Throughout April, Women's Health Services will bring awareness to opioid risks, promote best practices for the safe use of opioids, and provide education for overdose-reversal Naloxone Kits, informing women Veterans how to respond to an opioid overdose in the event of an emergency.

Helping Veterans in Need

Team AMVETS Welcome Home Program is looking for donations to help get Veterans off the streets and into a furnished residence with dignity. While VA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development provides residence vouchers, Team Amvets aims to donate gently used furniture and clothing. Items include:

- Dressers
- Nightstands
- Couches
- Coffee Tables
- End Tables
- Refrigerators
- Microwaves
- Dining Room Tables and Chairs
- Special request items such as rugs, desks
- Men, women and children’s clothing

For more information, questions and pick up, contact Karina Guzman @ 714-396-1872 or karina@teamvets.com

Research Opportunities

Veterans can participate in Human Subjects Studies at the VA San Diego Healthcare System (VASDHS). These studies help us find better medical treatments for Veterans and the community at large. VASDHS has many world-renowned scientists and conducts 400 human subject studies annually. There are a wide range of studies including sleep, posttraumatic stress, mental health, diabetes and many more. To sign up for a study, just log onto the VA web site, www.sandiego.va.gov and select Research Opportunities on the left column. The key information including study criteria and contact information will be available there.

Construction Updates
- **5 East (A-Pod) Single Patient Room Conversion**: Estimated turnover to users: May 2018.

- **Fire Safety Existing STW 11 Extension**: Estimated construction completion: June 2018.

- **Center Core Renovation – Floor 3 & 4**: Floor 4 phase 1 construction duration: 8-10 weeks.


- **Front Lobby, 1st Phase**: Estimated Completion – Late May, early June

### Limit Alcohol

Drinking alcohol can have benefits (relaxation, social interactions, taste), but it is also associated with a wide range of variety of risks:

- Reduced inhibitions (doing and saying things you wouldn’t do or say sober)
- Motor impairment that can result in falls, bodily harm, automobile accidents, and other consequences
- Impaired memory/concentration/judgment
- Harmful interactions with prescribed medications
- Damage to gastro-intestinal tract, liver, kidney, and other medical problems
- Erectile dysfunction and reduced testosterone levels

If you do choose to drink alcohol, drinking moderately reduces your risk for alcohol-related problems. Here are the recommended limits from the National Institute of Alcohol Use and Alcoholism:

- **Women**: 1 drink a day and no more than 7 drinks per week
- **Men**: 2 drinks a day and no more than 14 drinks per week
- **Anyone over 64 years of age**: 1 drink a day and no more than 7 drinks per week
- **Avoid heavy (or “binge”) drinking**, defined as 5 or more drinks in about 2 hours (men), 4 or more drinks in about 2 hours (women)

These guidelines refer to a drink that is equal to a 12-oz. beer (5%), a 5 oz. glass of wine (12%), or 1 ½ oz. spirits (80 proof). Higher levels of alcohol content require lower volume of drinks to stay within healthy limits.

If you are wondering or concerned about how much or how often you drink, your VA health care team can help if you have questions about limiting alcohol. There is a wide range of effective treatments provided by the VA that include individual
counseling, group treatments, medications to reduce craving or prevent relapse, and inpatient or residential treatment.

**Red Coat Ambassador Program**

Next time you visit the medical center, you will see smiling faces and red vests on the staff and volunteers who work in the front lobby answering questions and assisting Veterans and visitors. These Red Coat Ambassadors are part of a national VA program to make sure we are providing exceptional customer service and assistance with navigation. If you need assistance, just look for red vests and our friendly team of ambassadors will be happy to help you.

**Appointment Access**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appt. wait times:</th>
<th>Primary Care: 1.56 days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(completed appts as of 2/28/18)</td>
<td>Specialty Care: 5.74 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mental Health: 2.91 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Choice referrals: In fiscal year 2017, VASDHS referred 35,891 Veteran episodes of care to the community for a total cost of $69,891,170.

**Calendar**

- **Earth Day**: Apr. 22
- **National Volunteer Week**: Apr. 15 – Apr. 22
- **Administrative Professionals Week**: Apr. 22 - 28
- **World Malaria Day**: Mar. 30

**Facebook Question**

We’d like to hear from you on Facebook. Here’s this month’s question: What is your favorite specialty clinic?

**Other Newsletter Comments/Suggestions?** Christopher.menzie@va.gov
About VA San Diego Healthcare System

The VA San Diego Healthcare System (VASDHS) provides a wide range of inpatient and outpatient services at the medical center in La Jolla; and at six community clinics located in Chula Vista, Escondido, Imperial Valley, Mission Valley, Oceanside, Sorrento Valley and at the Rio Clinic. We provide medical, surgical, mental health, geriatric, spinal cord injury and advanced rehabilitation services. VASDHS has 296 authorized hospital beds including skilled nursing beds and operates several regional referral programs including cardiovascular surgery and spinal cord injury care.

We are affiliated with the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine and provide training for 1,440 medical interns, residents and fellows as well as 751 other health profession trainees in areas such as nursing, pharmacy, dental and dietetics. VASDHS has one of the largest research programs in the VA nationally with a budget of $41.3 million, 210 principal investigators and 698 projects.

Number of Veterans who received care from VASDHS in FY 2017: ........................................ 83,014
*Number of Veterans in San Diego County: .................243,369
*Number of Veterans in Imperial Valley: ..........................6,225
Total Veterans living in SD & Imperial Valley Counties: ...249,594

*from VetPop, 9/30/2017

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Important Phone Numbers:

VASDHS Main Line: ............................... (858) 552-8585
VASDHS Patient Call Center (Appointments/Questions): ................... (858) 552-7475
Health Benefits & Enrollment: ...................... (858) 552-7523
Billing (Copays, etc.): ........................................ (866) 802-6381
Billing (Community Care): ...................... (858) 657-1313
Billing (Choice Program): ...................... (855) 722-2838
Suicide Prevention: ...................... (800) 273-8255, press 1

VA’s Top 5 Priorities:

1. Greater Choice for Veterans
2. Modernize Our Systems
3. Focus Resources More Efficiently
4. Improve Timeliness of Services
5. Suicide Prevention