Team AMVETS and VA Recognized

Congratulations to Team AMVETS and VA San Diego Healthcare System for helping more than 1,000 Veterans in San Diego and over 4,000 in Southern California since the Welcome Home program’s inception in 2012. The program helps Veterans through donations of home furnishings including furniture, household items, cooking utensils and appliances. The program specifically targets Veterans who are exiting homelessness and moving into new housing that is unfurnished. Team AMVETS has donated approximately $2.5 million to serve Veterans in Southern California.

National Research Week Award

Dr. Kirk Hammond was presented with the 2017 William S. Middleton Award - the highest honor for VA Research - during San Diego’s VA Research Week celebration May 14. The award is given annually to VA investigators in recognition of outstanding achievements in biomedical research and contributions to cutting-edge medical care for U.S. Veterans.

Hammond is a cardiologist and researcher at VA San Diego Healthcare System and a Professor of Medicine at the University of California, San Diego and is recognized for landmark studies in cardiovascular research that have changed the medical community’s understanding of cardiovascular dysfunction and treatment. He and his team pioneered the use of gene therapy to treat heart failure. This approach was recently shown to be safe and effective in patients, and two late-stage clinical gene therapy trials have begun.

“Heart failure affects 6 million patients in the US and, even with optimal therapy, the prognosis is dismal, wrote Hammond, “so we need new therapies to address this unmet medical need.” “Cardiovascular gene transfer is conceptually an attractive method for treating heart failure.”

VA San Diego Ramps Up Non-Opioid Pain Management Options

Opioids are a type of pain medication that health care providers previously thought were safe in reducing chronic pain. However, we now know that long-term opioid use can lead to multiple problems including loss of pain relieving effects, increased pain, unintentional death, dependence, opioid use disorder,
breathing problems, mood changes, loss of testosterone, constipation and worsening of the immune system.

There have been major changes in how VA approaches treating pain. Your provider will focus on treating pain by using multiple treatment options including non-medication and non-opioid treatments to help you begin to better manage your pain. Pain can impact all areas of your life including limiting you from doing your daily activities. Pain can cause your life to become stressful and may worsen your other medical problems. The first step in treating pain is through self-management such as practicing mindfulness, eating healthy foods, stopping smoking, moving your body every day, losing weight and practicing deep breathing and relaxation.

VA San Diego Healthcare System offers multiple non-medication treatments to help you with self-management and retraining your brain to reduce pain.

For more information, please discuss these pain management options with your primary care provider.

**Maternity Care**

The VA Diego Healthcare System offers comprehensive maternity care services for women Veterans. Maternity benefits have been included in the VA medical benefits package since 1996. These benefits begin with the confirmation of pregnancy, preferably in the first trimester, and continue through the postpartum visit, usually 6-8 weeks after delivery or when the Veteran is medically released from obstetric care. Maternity care is provided by non-VA providers in non-VA facilities, which are accredited to provide care to pregnant women and newborns. Currently, patients are referred to either Naval Medical Center Balboa or Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton.

Newborn medical care is also covered for 7 days post-delivery. In addition, our pregnant patients are closely followed by our Maternity Care Coordinator, Melanie Krupa-Kelly, RN, with monthly phone calls. She provides a free breast pump, two nursing bras, nursing pads and a maternity girdle/belt to all eligible women Veterans. Childbirth preparation classes, parenting classes, nutrition counseling, breastfeeding support and lactation classes are also covered benefits, and low income Veterans can apply for the Infant Car Seat Program to receive a free car seat.

**PTSD Month**

June is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Month. Get the resources you need to help yourself, a friend or a loved one. Start here:

https://www.ptsd.va.gov/about/ptsd-awareness/

**Construction Updates**
• The medical center front lobby project to be completed by the end of June.

• Heavy structural work (includes large crane) will be occurring during the first few weeks of June at the Inpatient Psychiatric Expansion location. This will impact surrounding area, Medical Center South East Quad (noise and vibration) and is estimated to be 2-3 weeks depending on phases.

New Child Friendly Waiting Rooms

VA San Diego Healthcare System has been working to create a more family friendly environment for our Veterans by creating a child-friendly waiting rooms in the primary care clinics at La Jolla, Mission Valley and Oceanside locations.

Gateway to Healthy Living

If you’re looking for ways to manage stress, get more active, eat more wisely, quit tobacco and improve your health, this is the class for you!

Gateway to Healthy Living is a 90-minute walk-in session with two follow up phone calls.

The session also helps veterans set goals for any behavior changes they would like to make such as stress management, tobacco cessation, weight loss etc.

The class is offered the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month, 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at La Jolla in our patient education classroom on the 1st floor.

All classes are walk-in – no reservations or appointments needed.

Appointment Access

| Appt. wait times: (completed appts as of 4/30/18) | Primary Care: 1.35 days |
| Specialty Care: 5.11 days |
| Mental Health: 2.47 days |

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
National PTSD Awareness Month
Men’s Health Week: June 11 - 18
Father’s Day: June 17
First Day of Summer: June 21

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

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