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## News Release

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### **VA San Diego Healthcare System to Feature Clothesline Project**

SAN DIEGO (April 16, 2012) -- VA San Diego Healthcare System (VASDHS) will display this year's Clothesline Project in honor of Sexual Assault Awareness Month on Monday, April 23 at 11:30 a.m. in the Multipurpose Room of the San Diego VA Medical Center.

The project features decorated t-shirts or uniform items from male and female Veterans reflecting their experience with military sexual trauma (MST) and recovery. MST can be defined as psychological trauma, which in the judgment of a VA mental health professional, resulted from a physical assault of a sexual nature, battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment which occurred while the Veteran was serving on active duty or active duty for training.

"About 1 in 5 women and 1 in 100 men have told their VA healthcare provider that they experienced MST," said Dr. Carolyn Allard, Director of the Military Sexual Trauma Program at VASDHS. "Despite higher rates of MST among women, absolute numbers of men and women experiencing MST are roughly equal due to the greater numbers of men in the military. MST can affect a person's physical and mental health, even many years later."

According to Dr. Allard, symptoms include but are not limited to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, excessive guilt/shame, interpersonal difficulties, disrupted sleep, isolation, substance abuse/dependence, suicidal thoughts or attempts, diabetes, chronic pain, gastrointestinal and gynecologic problems, and immune-system disorders.

The Clothesline Project will be displayed on April 23 and 24, 2012, in the Multipurpose Room at the San Diego VA Medical Center and April 25 and 26 in the Mission Valley clinic 4<sup>th</sup> floor conference room, and Oceanside clinic's front foyer on April 27.

For more information on MST, please contact Carolyn Allard, at 619-400-5189.

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