

# Health Education News

## The Veterans Health Library

### *Drum roll, please . . .*

The Office of Veterans Health Education and Information, through the VHA Preventive Care Program, announces a new national contract for a VHA-wide Veterans Health Library. The contract has been awarded to Krames/Staywell, a patient education services company that was selected by an internal VHA Source Selection Evaluation Board as the most comprehensive resource for consistent, patient-centered health education and information for Veterans and family members. The Veterans Health Library will be integrated into the My HealthVet portal, and its topics will span the continuum of VHA healthcare delivery. It will be available to Veterans and family members in the community and in all VHA health care delivery settings, no matter where a Veteran receives care.



HEALTH EDUCATION NEWS

Krames/Staywell, which was founded in 1974, is a market leader in patient education and consumer health information solutions. Over 85% of American hospitals, including 70% of VA hospitals and medical facilities, currently use Krames/Staywell resources to improve quality of care and patient satisfaction and to comply with The Joint Commission standards. Krames/ Staywell offers a wide array of educational tools for patients and consumers, as well as communication and teaching aids for caregivers. Its robust library includes over 1,500 printed booklets and brochures, 3,300 brief fact sheets covering specific health topics, 400 patient education videos, and more than 2,000 drug information sheets, available in both English and Spanish. The Library will also incorporate VHA-specific content.

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The Library will also be available to family members, to help them support the Veteran's active involvement in health care and the self-care strategies needed to promote health or to manage chronic or acute conditions.

The Library's educational resources will be available in print, electronic, and audiovisual formats, as well as VHA-approved social media (e.g., texting, blogging, Twitter) and other emerging technologies.

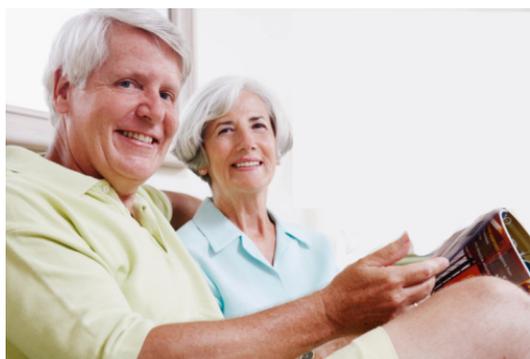


Library content will be developed and formatted in accordance with Veterans' health literacy needs and will also accommodate Veterans with physical and visual impairments.

The Library will provide Veterans and family members with health education materials and information that will help them:

- Prepare for clinical encounters
- Understand their conditions and treatment plans
- Communicate effectively with their health care team members
- Actively partner with their provider and health care team members
- Share in health care decision making
- Self-monitor and self-manage chronic conditions
- Prepare for transition to other areas of care

The Veterans Health Library, which is projected to be operational within all facilities by the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2011, will be integral to patient-centered care and to the Patient-Aligned Care Team (PACT) program. It will represent a tangible commitment to "empowering Veterans through education and information," which is one of VHA's core principles of Veteran-centered care.



**Becky Hartt Minor, MA**  
Health Educator  
Veterans Health Education and Information

*"empowering Veterans through education and information"*

## Prescription Drug Overdose Prevention

*Remember:*

*Your Name*

*Your Script*

*Your Responsibility*



Prescriptions for health can turn into a dangerous cocktail when ill-used. **Unintentional drug overdose is the second leading cause of injury death in the home.**<sup>1</sup> Do not combine or add medications without a doctor or pharmacist's approval. It can possibly lead to harmful reactions, poisoning . . . even death.

It's important to:

- Store medications out of the reach of children
- Use prescriptions only for their intended use
- Consult a doctor or pharmacist before combining medications to ensure there are no harmful interactions.



<sup>1</sup> National Safety Council Injury Facts, 2010 Edition. Information supplied by the National Safety Council

# What is Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT)?

## AHRQ's Definition of the Medical Home

The medical home model holds promise as a way to improve health care in America by transforming how primary care is organized and delivered. Building on the work of a large and growing community, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) defines a medical home not simply as a place but as a model of the organization of primary care that delivers the core functions of primary health care.



workers, educators, and care coordinators. Although some medical home practices may bring together large and diverse teams of care providers to meet the needs of their patients, many others, including smaller practices, will build virtual teams linking themselves and their patients to providers and services in their communities.

The medical home encompasses five functions and attributes:

- **Patient-centered:** The primary care medical home provides primary health care that is relationship-based with an orientation toward the whole person. Partnering with patients and their families requires understanding and respecting each patient's unique needs,

culture, values, and preferences. The medical home practice actively supports patients in learning to manage and organize their own care at the level the patient chooses. Recognizing that patients and families are core members of the care team, medical home practices ensure that they are fully informed partners in establishing care plans



- **Coordinated care:** The primary care medical home coordinates care across all elements of the broader health care system, including specialty care, hospitals, home health care, and community services and supports. Such coordination is particularly critical during transitions between sites of care, such as when patients are being discharged from the hospital. Medical home practices also excel at building clear and open communication among patients and families, the medical home, and members of the broader care team.
- **Superb access to care:** The primary care medical home delivers accessible services with shorter waiting times for urgent needs, enhanced in-person hours, around-the-clock telephone or electronic access to a member of the care team, and alternative methods of communication such as email and telephone care. The medical home practice is responsive to patients' preferences regarding access.



- **Comprehensive care:** The primary care medical home is accountable for meeting the large majority of each patient's physical and mental health care needs, including prevention and wellness, acute care, and chronic care.

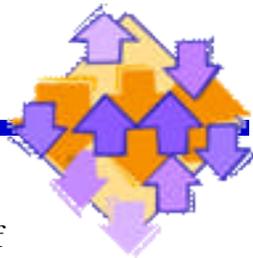
Providing comprehensive care requires a team of care providers. This team might include physicians, advanced practice nurses, physician assistants, nurses, pharmacists, nutritionists, social



- A systems-based approach to quality and safety: The primary care medical home demonstrates a commitment to quality and quality improvement by ongoing engagement in activities such as using evidence-based medicine and clinical decision-support tools to guide shared decision making with patients and families, engaging in performance measurement and improvement, measuring and responding to patient experiences and patient satisfaction, and practicing population health management. Sharing robust quality and safety data and improvement activities publicly is also an important marker of a system-level commitment to quality.

AHRQ recognizes the central role of health IT in successfully operationalizing and implementing the key features of the medical home. Additionally, AHRQ notes that building a primary care delivery platform that the Nation can rely on for accessible, affordable, high-quality health care will require significant workforce development and fundamental payment reform. Without these critical elements, the potential of primary care will not be achieved.

## The Highs and Lows of Blood Counts



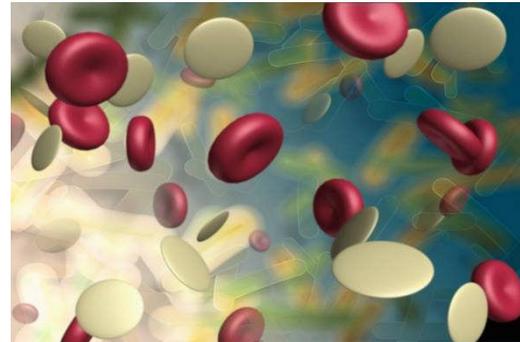
A **Complete Blood Count** is performed to measure the levels of the different types of cells in your body. Blood is made up of three types of cells: red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets. All three types, working together, perform vital bodily tasks.

Your CBC (complete blood count) consists of:

- RBC (red blood cells)
- HGB (Hemoglobin)
- HCT (Hematocrit)
- MCV (Mean Corpuscular Volume)
- MCH (Mean Corpuscular Hemoglobin)
- MCHC (Mean Corpuscular Hemoglobin Concentration)
- PLT (Platelets)
- WBC (White Blood Cells)

### Red Blood Cells

Red blood cells reflect the oxygen carrying capacity of blood. A decrease in red blood cells is commonly called anemia. There are different causes for different types of anemia.



An increase in red blood cells is commonly called polycythemia. Normal range of RBC is 4.7 – 6.1; however hgb and hct readings are used more readily to assess blood status.

**Hgb = hemoglobin:** reflects the oxygen carrying capacity of your blood (normal range = 13 – 18).

**Hct = hematocrit:** indirect measure of RBC mass; helpful in determining type of anemia.

Also helpful in determining type of anemia:

- MCV = Mean Corpuscular Volume
- MCHC = Mean Corpuscular Hemoglobin Concentration
- MCH = Mean Corpuscular Hemoglobin
- RDW = Red Cell Size Distribution Width

### Platelets (PLT)

- Blood cells that are necessary for blood clotting: help control bleeding
- Normal platelet count = 141-150
- Decreased platelet counts mean a greater risk for bleeding
- Increased platelet counts mean a greater risk for clotting

Next issue: *Looking at WBC and risk for infection*

**Karen Reider, RN, MSN**  
HSTM VH, Columbia, MO

**Melissa S. Davies, LMSW**



I joined the VISN 15 team in September 2008 to serve veterans and their families as the My HealthVet VISN Coordinator. Since graduating from the University at Buffalo (UB) with my Masters in Social Work (MSW) in 2008 I have served veterans, active-duty personnel, and their families at the VA. Before coming to VA Heartland I worked with the Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) Clinic at VA WNY Healthcare System in Buffalo, NY.

As My HealthVet VISN Coordinator I am able to continue to provide excellent service to our veterans, active-duty personnel, and their families through the My HealthVet website. The website allows veterans to store their health information, track their vital statistics like blood sugar and blood pressure levels, look up health resources, refill their VA prescriptions, and more. My HealthVet is another tool for veterans and VA providers to help VA patients live healthy lives. To learn more and register for, please, visit the My HealthVet at [www.MyHealth.va.gov](http://www.MyHealth.va.gov).

VA's award winning My HealthVet website will be growing in the next five years offering more features to aid our veteran users in taking control of their health. One new feature is Secure Messaging, which will be coming available during 2011 and 2012 will connect VA patients to their providers at the VA. It is exciting to be a part of this growth and I look forward to continue to say thank you to the men and women that served our country by providing them with the tools to take control of their health. Thank you for your service.

## VA Website is a Personal Tool for Employees and Veterans

### Five Reasons You Should Be Using My HealthVet

1

**Be empowered to control your health** You can update the status of your Personal Health Record 24/7, refill your VA prescriptions online, and e-journal, all on our award-winning, easy to use website.

2

**Avoid duplicate tests and procedures** You can enter results from previous self-entered diagnostics tests and procedures that can be shared with your non-VA providers and you can update your Personal Health Record before each visit.

3

**Move easily from doctor to doctor** You are armed with information that eases the transition from VA providers to non-VA providers.

4

**Improve the efficiency and safety of your health care** Updated, accurate health records save patients and caregivers valuable time, help prevent unwanted drug interactions and help inform you of your diagnoses and treatments.

5

**Get personalized VA Wellness Reminders** Online access enables you to view a personalized calendar with local VA activities, and receive online VA Wellness

**LOG ON. SIGN UP. TODAY!**

Adapted from an announcement of the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Health Information



# Shining Light on Vitamin D!

Nationally, vitamin D has been a recent topic of conversation. The number of people having inadequate levels of Vitamin D in their blood has increased and deficiencies can be found in all ethnicities and age groups. Being vitamin D deficient may increase the risk of a variety of chronic diseases including osteoporosis, heart disease, some cancers, multiple sclerosis and other infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and the seasonal flu.

Known as *“the sunshine vitamin”*, many people receive adequate vitamin D from spending 10 to 30 minutes in the sun several times a week. However, those who avoid the sun, cover their bodies with sunscreen or clothing while outdoors, people with dark skin, people who are obese or who have undergone gastric bypass surgery, older adults, or those who live in the northern half of the United States during the winter months have increased risk of developing a vitamin D deficiency. If you fall into one of these categories or are concerned about your levels, ask your doctor to order a simple vitamin D blood test.

Vitamin D is a nutrient which we eat and a hormone our bodies make. Top dietary sources of vitamin D include dairy products, breakfast cereals, orange juice and margarines which are fortified with vitamin D plus fatty fish such as salmon and tuna.

Below are the Institute of Medicine’s recommended intake levels:

Age	Vitamin D measured in International Units (IU)
Up to age 50	200 IU
Ages 51 to 70	400 IU
Age 70+	600 IU

Since few foods contain natural sources of vitamin D, for many people the best way to get enough vitamin D is by taking a supplement. Some multivitamins contain vitamin D, but the level is often too low. If your multivitamin contains less than 1,000 IU of vitamin D, you may want to speak with your healthcare provider about adding an additional vitamin D supplement.

With the winter months approaching, remember to ask your healthcare provider for a simple blood test to check your vitamin D levels. Try to include fortified foods and fatty fish in your dietary meal planning and ask about taking a vitamin D supplement if needed.

**Kristine Jamerson MS, RD, LD**  
St. Louis MOVE! Program Dietitian



## Secure Messaging Pilot at Wichita

## A message from the V ISN 15 Health Education Chairperson

As you may have heard, there are some exciting changes coming to VA to improve care to our Veterans. One of the exciting changes is secure messaging.

Secure messaging is a way for Veterans to communicate NON-URGENT issues with their primary care team via My HealthVet. The Wichita VAMC and the six Community Based Outreach Clinics are the first facility in VISN 15 to offer Secure Messaging. We are in the process of identifying Veterans who use My HealthVet, have completed the In-Person Authentication process, and wish to Secure Message with their primary care provider. Many of our Veterans are already using My HealthVet to refill prescriptions, look up health information, and track their personal health.

In adding secure messaging, you will be able to ask your primary care team non-urgent questions and get a response within 72 hours. We are excited to offer secure messaging and advance the way you access your health care making feedback and responses from your healthcare team only a few simple clicks away. Look for Secure Messaging to be offered at your facility in the near future.



Cathy Steele

As the holiday season approaches, it becomes more important for us to take care of ourselves. Along with holidays comes additional stress and anxiety for many of us. Finding a way to alleviate or manage the stress is important for our health.



Yoga can relieve stress, but it can do so much more than that. Yoga has also been shown to reduce inflammation that plays a major role in chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and arthritis. Why is yoga so effective at minimizing stress and inflammation? A study by Dr. William Malarkey, MD, suggests that yoga increases a person's flexibility which promotes relaxation, thereby curbing the stress response.

So over the holidays take some time for yourself. Try out a yoga class or even practice a few simple yoga moves in your home. There are a wealth of books and videos available for purchase at local book-stores. Most local libraries also have a large variety of information on yoga practice. You could also check with a local gym, YMCA, or even your VA medical center to find a guided yoga class near you.

Rachael Beard, RN

# What's new at the Robert J. Dole VA Medical?

## Welcome New Patients

The Robert J. Dole VAMC is proud to announce our New Patient Orientation Class. This class is offered the first Thursday of each month to all newly enrolled Veterans. This New Patient Orientation Class gives the Veterans an overview of the services available and helps them to learn how to navigate through the VA system. Newly enrolled Veterans seeking more information can telephone Cathy Steele, Veteran Health Education Coordinator, at 1-888-878-6881 extension 53810.

## Cancer Support Group

For it is Hope that makes life worth living. Are you or someone you love suffering from Cancer? Please join us for our monthly Cancer Support Group meetings the fourth Wednesday of each month in the Patient Education Center. For more information please call 1-888-878-6881 extension 53810.

## New Call Center for Wichita VAMC

The Robert J. Dole VAMC call center was developed and opened in the spring of 2010. The goals established for the new call center is focused around the veteran's number one complaint; the desire to speak to a live person on the phone.

A variety of disciplines including 6 RNs, 1 LPN, 1 ARNP and 1 HTA make up the staff in the call center. Each of these individuals strives to answer each call within 30 seconds as well as maintain an abandonment rate of less than 5%. The call center assists with multiple calls ranging from medication refills to emergent concerns. Currently the call center is processing an average of 10,000 calls per month.

## Women's Health Program

Every VA facility is committed to meeting the unique needs of Women Veterans by delivering the highest quality health care to each woman, while offering her the privacy, dignity, and sensitivity to gender-specific needs that she serves. The Wichita VAMC has a full-time Women Veterans Program Manager ready to assist you in getting timely access to the health care you need. Call 1-888-878-6881 extension 54605

## Dementia Awareness

The Wichita VAMC has recently formed a dementia awareness committee. Dementia causes many deficits including decline in memory, reasoning skills, inability to function with activities of daily living and inability to communicate. The Robert J. Dole VAMC is developing a dementia awareness campaign and a Dementia Steering Committee to facilitate and address the health care issues that many of our Veterans afflicted with dementia are faced with.

## New Hospice & Palliative Care Unit

The Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center has proudly opened its new 8-bed Hospice and Palliative Care Unit. Here we found a way to provide a home-like environment for our Veterans that were in need of inpatient hospice services. The goal of Hospice and Palliative Care is to achieve the best possible quality of life through relief of suffering, control of symptoms, and restoration of functional capacity while remaining sensitive to personal, cultural, and religious values, beliefs and practices. This is done by a multi-discipline approach which includes Physicians, Advance Practice Nurses, Registered Nurses, License Practical Nurses, Social Workers, Dieticians, Chaplains, Pharmacists, Physical Therapists, Psychologists, and Administrators.