VA PUGET SOUND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Working together for the Health of our Veterans

ANNUAL REPORT

2008

Message from the Director

STAN JOHNSON

I am pleased to present VA Puget Sound Health Care System's 2008 Annual Report. This look back exemplifies what was truly a year of change and growth for our medical center, our community outreach initiatives and our ability to deliver highest-quality health care to the Veterans we serve.

For those of you who have visited our medical center during the past year, you are aware that we are in the midst of an unprecedented number of facility improvements. Both American Lake and Seattle are being upgraded to address not only the physical environment in which care is delivered, but to improve the way teams interact and work side by side to achieve the goals of an integrated care model of health care delivery.

2008 was a year of expansion, bringing VA health care closer to Veterans in communities across Western Washington. We opened our long anticipated community based outpatient clinic in Northwest Washington with an interim clinic site across from United General Hospital in Sedro-Woolley. This clinic site has meant a great deal to Veterans who, along with our staff, are looking forward with anticipation to the opening of the permanent clinic site in Mount Vernon near Skagit Valley Hospital. Construction is well underway with the move into this new permanent clinic space scheduled for early summer of 2009.

Recognizing that those living in the South Puget Sound region face challenges to receiving VA health care, we began seeing patients in Aberdeen and Shelton as part of a partnership with the Office of Rural Health. With the addition of a fully equipped Mobile Medical Unit, VA Puget Sound now has the ability to respond to local disasters and reach out to communities where access to VA health care is limited. We also have plans to launch the South Puget Sound Community Based Outpatient Clinic in the Chehalis/Centralia region in 2010.Additionally, VA Puget Sound staff played a key role in more than 30 major outreach events across the state, reaching sharing valuable information on benefits, services, and programs.

Our strong community partnerships continue to move forward with the addition of the Everett Vet Center permanent site which joins an already strong network of Vet Centers in Seattle, Tacoma, Bellingham, Spokane and Yakima. We continue to enjoy a close working relationship with the Washington State National Guard, Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration and Madigan Army Hospital which allows us to reach new Veterans and active duty service members before they transition to civilian life.

Our partnership with Valor Healthcare has enabled us to expand our community based outpatient clinic network across the Puget Sound region, while our close partnerships with the University of Washington and 50 other academic institutions allows VA Puget Sound to play a major role in training the next generation of health care professionals. More than 700 medical residents and 1,590 allied health professionals in audiology and speech pathology, dietetics, HRS&D, radiology, optometry, podiatry, occupational therapy, physical therapy, recreation therapy, psychology, health information management, information technology, medical informatics and other health care programs trained here in 2008.

As the largest facility in the VA's Northwest Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN 20), VA Puget Sound continues to look for ways to expand its role as the tertiary care center for Veterans throughout the Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. In FY 2008, 68,102 Veterans came to VA Puget Sound for treatment and care, including 739,301 visits for outpatient care. VA Puget Sound continues to be a leader on many fronts including expansion of telemedicine clinics in

AMERICAN LAKE

The American Lake campus began in 1923 as the 94th Veterans Hospital to be built by the War Department for the provision of care to World War I Veterans and was built on 377 acres of the 87,000 acre Fort Lewis property. Many of the stucco and terra cotta buildings are listed on the National Register of Historical Buildings. The medical center was dedicated in 1924.

SEATTLE

The Seattle Division was constructed from 1949 to 1951, on a 44-acre site that had been a part of Jefferson Park. The site was dedicated on May 15, 1951, on Beacon Hill, with views of downtown Seattle, Puget Sound, Mt. Rainier and the Cascade mountain range.

cardiology, dermatology, surgery and home spinal cord injury care. Plans are in place to implement an electronic imaging system that allows medical images including radiology exams, to be securely captured and stored electronically and read from anywhere in the network.

2008 was also a period in which we tackled head-on the issue of increasing patient access. Through our "systems redesign" efforts we reduced wait times in many areas of care and are now offering same-day access in many of our clinics. Through referring patients to community providers and examining our own ways of providing care, we are increasing how efficient we can be with our resources. You can read more about in this effort later in this report.

VA Puget Sound and Madigan Army Medical Center successfully completed a demonstration project to ensure that electronic medical records can be exchanged bi-directionally, easing the burden of sharing patient information across secure platforms. Our Deployment Health Clinic model under the leadership of Dr. Stephen Hunt was nationally recognized as a model for post deployment care, and Dr. Hunt received the VA's first Trailblazer Award for Outstanding Primary Care Leadership. Another achievement of note includes Dr. Benjamin A. Lipsky, Director of Primary Care Clinic Seattle and Professor of Medicine at University of Washington, receiving the Edward James Olmos Award for Advocacy in Amputation Prevention which is given annually to the clinician or scientist who has had the greatest impact on reducing complications of diabetic foot disease worldwide.

As part of VA's Northwest Health Network, we are proud to serve as the focal point for specialized VA health care in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Alaska. We are proud of our achievements and successes in 2008 and are excited to see what challenges and change 2009 will bring.

62,920
THE NUMBER OF VETERANS TREATED THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2008, REPRESENTING A 4.65% INCREASE WHEN COMPARED TO THE SAME TIME LAST YEAR.

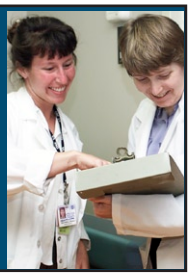
$18 million
AMOUNT RECIEVED ANNUALLY IN VA INTRAMURAL FUNDING

$20 million
AMOUNT RECIEVED ANNUALLY IN NON-VA FUNDS

170 NUMBER OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS AT VA PUGET SOUND IN 2008

650 NUMBER OF ACTIVE RESEARCH PROJECTS AT VA PUGET SOUND IN 2008

MORE THAN **700** MEDICAL RESIDENTS AND **1,590** ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS TRAIN AT **VA PUGET SOUND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**



Leading the Way Through Quality Care

VA Puget Sound is an academic medical center that is affiliated with the University of Washington. The medical center provides a full range of patient care services, with state-of-the-art technology as well as education and research.

Specialized Programs

Alzheimer's Disease Research and Treatment Center
Brachytherapy Program
Center for Ethics
Center for Polytrauma Care
Comprehensive Cancer Center
Deployment Health Clinic
Diabetes/Endocrinology Research Center
Ex-Prisoner of War Programs
Epidemiology Research and Information Center
Gulf War Illness Research and Treatment
Gulf War Veterans Health Registry
Hepatitis C Collaborative Center for Education and Research
Homeless Veterans Domiciliary Treatment and Rehabilitation Program
Minority Veterans Outreach
OEF/OIF Seamless Transition Program
Post Deployment Health Clinic
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
Prosthetics and Amputation Therapy
Rehabilitation Research and Prosthetics
Residential Blind Rehabilitation
Serious Mental Illness
Spinal Cord Injury

Nationally Recognized Centers of Excellence

Geriatric Research, Education & Clinical Center
Health Services Research & Development
Mental Illness Research, Education & Clinical Center
Multiple Sclerosis Education and Research Center
Substance Abuse Treatment and Education
Spinal Cord Injury Treatment
Rehabilitation for Amputations, Prosthetics and Limb Loss Prevention

Additional Programs Include

Fisher House (opened September, 2008)

Bringing VA Care Closer to Veterans

Community Based Outpatient Care

VA Puget Sound has worked closely with community leaders and elected officials to expand access to VA health care in Western Washington. With a commitment to decrease appointment wait times, are part of VA Puget Sound's multi-pronged effort to improve access and quality of care. This includes community based outpatient care clinics in Bremerton, Port Angeles and Northwest Washington (Sedro-Woolley/Mount Vernon), partnering with Valor Healthcare in the Seattle Metro area, and launching outreach to the South Puget Sound Region while planning another Community Based Outpatient Clinic in the Chehalis/Centralia area.

> "We are continually upgrading our facilities, adding clinics and working on innovative ideas and projects to improve our patients' experience at VA Puget Sound."
>
> - DeAnn Dietrich
> Deputy Director, VA Puget Sound Health Care System

"We are continually upgrading our facilities, adding clinics and working on innovative ways to improve our patients' experience at VA Puget Sound," said DeAnn Dietrich, deputy director for VA Puget Sound.

Another new development is the approval of a Mobile Medical Unit for VA Puget Sound. As part of VA's national Rural Health Care Initiative, this mobile unit will allow our staff to deliver care closer to the thousands of Veterans who live in some of the more rural and remote areas of Washington state. It has already begun monthly trips to Aberdeen and Shelton.

"In addition to increasing access, we want to ensure that we are being efficient with the taxpayer's money," said Dietrich. "The more efficiently our dollars are spent, the more we can concentrate on providing the best care to our Veterans."

2008 CBOC Census

1 Bremerton
VISITS: 13,896
ENROLLED: 3,204

2 Port Angeles
VISITS: 3,561
ENROLLED: 1,023

3 Northwest Washington
VISITS: 2,484
ENROLLED: 1,436

4 Bellevue (Valor Healthcare)
VISITS: 2,915
ENROLLED: 1,215

5 Federal Way (Valor Healthcare)
VISITS: 9,368
ENROLLED: 2,621

6 North Seattle (Valor Healthcare)
VISITS: 6,372
ENROLLED: 2,247

For more information about VA Puget Sound's Community Based Outpatient Program, please call Chris Foster at (206) 306-6123.

Bremerton CBOC

Port Angeles CBOC

Federal Way CBOC

Lake City CBOC

FISHER HOUSE

a home away from home

Whether guests stay for a few days or several months, whether the outcomes are good or bad, VA Puget Sound's Fisher House fulfills its mission: to provide a "home away from home" for the families of Veterans who are being treated at VA Puget Sound. More than 177 families have come through the doors since Fisher House opened in September of 2008. Guests often arrive tired and tentative. Worrying about their loved one is the most pressing concern. Families come from all over the country, but they all share the concerns of having an ill or injured loved one. In sharing this experience, they create their own support group, lending encouragement, thoughts, and prayers. "Families feel cared for and less isolated within the Fisher House community. They are able to focus their energy on supporting their loved one, knowing that at the end of the day they'll return home to friends and a good, home-cooked meal," said Cecile Bagrow, Fisher House manager.

For a recent 4-year old resident, being in the Fisher House was an adventure. She had her auntie to watch her, lots of new toys to play with, and staff who fussed over her. She was bright and vivacious, a sharp contrast to the heavy looks on Auntie and Mommy's faces. She was blithely unaware of how close she was to losing Daddy. Her mom was convinced that having his little girl so close by is a big part of what helped her husband bounce back. We took a picture of her kissing our pig, Hope, and she gave it to Daddy. He was discharged the next day. It wasn't the picture that did it, of course. But seeing his daughter every day and feeling her love most certainly helped Daddy, a real life example of the Fisher Foundation motto: "A family's love is good medicine."

177 NUMBER OF FAMILIES THAT STAYED IN PUGET SOUND FISHER HOUSE IN FIRST SIX MONTHS SINCE OPENED IN SEPTEMBER 2008

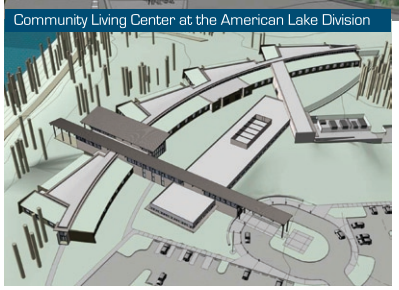
$10 million

AMOUNT SAVED BY FAMILIES NATIONALLY IN LODGING COSTS, PLUS FOOD AND TRANS-PORTATION ANNUALLY

FAMILIES SERVED BY FISHER HOUSE NATIONALLY MORE THAN **11,000**

Improving Environment of Care

Community Living Center at the American Lake Division



VA Puget Sound is about to embark on the largest facilities improvement period since the early 1980s. Seven large construction projects have either begun construction or will be starting in 2009, and scheduled for completion by 2011. The largest of these, a replacement Nursing Home Care Unit (Community Living Center) at the American Lake Division, began construction in October and is on pace to be completed in 2010.

The highlight of the Seattle Division upgrades will be a new Emergency Room building, formal entrance and new canteen space. This remodel will add a covered entryway and give the facility a signature entrance.

CONSTUCTION PROJECT TITLE & DESCRIPTION	EST. COST	PERIOD
Seismic Strengthening of Energy Plant at Seattle	$2,000,000	2009-2010
New Emergency Room Building at Seattle	$10,000,000	2009-2010
Modernize Medicine Bed Unit 2 West	$5,000,000	2009-2010
Expand and Improve Blind Rehab. Unit at American Lake	$3,000,000	2009-2010
Expand and Improve Domiciliary Bldg. at American Lake	$6,000,000	2009-2010
Seismic Improvements for American Lake Campus Buildings	$8,000,000	2009-2010

VA Puget Sound has embarked on approximately $14.8 million worth of maintenance projects, renovations, remodeling and infrastructure improvements in 2008 and another $15.7 million is expected for 2009.

VA Puget Sound in the News HIGHLIGHTS 2008

2008 was a banner year for VA Puget Sound's Office of Public Affairs. Between hosting the ribbon cutting event for the VA Puget Sound Fisher House and announcing the future home of the Northwest Washington Community Based Outpatient Clinic, Public Affairs worked with our staff to raise community awareness and educate our staff about the excellent work the goes on each day at VA Puget Sound.

2008 Congressional Highlights

Congressmen Adam Smith and Dave Reichert both took time from their schedules to visit the American Lake Division to learn more about the recent developments in helping Veterans deal with the Traumatic Brain Injury, post-traumatic stress and post combat readjustment. They also saw the Blind Rehabilitation program, and gained a stronger understanding of the community living center concept approved for the new nursing home.

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi was invited by representatives Norm Dicks, Jay Inslee, and Jim McDermott to visit the Seattle Division to learn about the post deployment and readjustment programs underway at VA Puget Sound through our Women's program, our Mental Health program, Spinal Cord Injury and Polytrauma programs. During her visit, she met with three families who shared their experiences at VA Puget Sound.

The American Lake Division hosted a community meeting of the Washington Legislature's Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs which included a presentation on the American Lake Veterans Golf Course.

Congressional Visit to VA Puget Sound

Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and members of the Washington State congressional delegation (Jim McDermott, Norm Dicks, and Jay Inslee) visited VA Puget Sound's Seattle Division this past July.

> "Speaker Pelosi commented numerous times about the amazing work that goes on inside the walls of our hospital. It was obvious to her about all the high-quality care that goes on here."
>
> - Stan Johnson
> Director, VA Puget Sound Health Care System

"The opportunity to explain what injured veterans are dealing with every day, and to show how we are working to improve the lives of these Veterans is something we are very excited about," said Stan Johnson, director of VA Puget Sound.

During 2008, more than 90 news stories appeared in outlets locally, regionally and nationally enabling VA Puget Sound to share it successes, to shape opinion and to inform the public about our good works. This included hosting VIPs, showcasing our Deployment Health Clinic program as a model to leaders across the county, and hosting a very successful ribbon cutting and dedication event for the VA Puget Sound Fisher House. Not to mention major press coverage of the future home of the Northwest Washington Community Based Outpatient Clinic, and numerous local, regional and national news stories about our efforts, VA Puget Sound had a banner year in terms of it's publicity.

2008 Media Highlights

KCTS public television interviewed the Director of the Center for Polytrauma Care, Dr. Jay Uomoto, and some of his patients as part of an investigative report detailing the difficulties of Veterans dealing with Traumatic Brain Injury.

ABC World News Tonight, Associated Press, Seattle Times and Tacoma News Tribune extensively covered the role that golf and the American Lake Golf Course have played as part of rehabilitation therapy and the efforts of the dedicated volunteers who manage the course.

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer covered the achievement of Beijing Paralympian and gold medalist Will Groulx who receives treatment in our Spinal Cord Injury unit. Mr. Groulx was the leading scorer of the U.S. Wheelchair Rubgy team.

PBS's NOVA program filmed American Lake emergency physician Tom Tarter for an installment of their "Survivor M.D." program. Dr. Tarter is part of a group of doctors that NOVA has followed since they started Harvard Medical School in 1987.

The History Channel, as part of their series "The Seven Deadly Sins", interviewed Dr. David Cummings. Dr. Cummings appeared on the "Gluttony" episode to talk about his research with the grehlin hormone which is important to appetite regulation.

HBO interviewed Dr. Suzanne Craft at part of a multi-part documentary about Alzheimer's patients, researchers and treatments. "Losing It All: The Reality of Alzheimer's Disease", follows five families who have been affected by the debilitating disease.

Deployment Health

Innovations in Post-Combat Care

Meeting the needs of returning Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans

In 2008, VA Puget Sound saw 4,260 OEF/OIF Veterans, a 19% increase over 2007. Supporting programs include the Seamless Transition Program, Deployment Health Clinic, and Polytrauma. These programs function with partners such as the Department of Defense, National Guard, Reserves, US Department of Labor, Office of the Washington State Governor, and Washington State Department of Health. This collaboration assures that returning OEF/OIF Veterans have their health care and other needs met and is being used as a model program across the country. The facility also has a full-time OEF/OIF Program Manager and a full-time Transition Patient Advocate.

4,260

THE NUMBER OF **OEF/OIF VETERANS SEEN BY VA PUGET SOUND IN 2008**

Deployment Health Model in 2008

The VA Puget Sound Deployment Health Clinic has been identified as a VA best practice and has been chosen as the national model for post-deployment care. This holistic approach addresses physical, mental and social needs cares for Veterans who are experiencing unique health concerns related to military deployment and is based on extensive experience working with recently deployed Veterans.

2008 Highlights Include:

- VA Puget Sound hosted the first national conference on Post-Deployment Integrated Care in Seattle in August 2008.
- The Puget Sound model was officialy named a "best practices approach to post combat care" and was adapted to offer three recommended options for approaches to integrated post-combat care for all VA medical centers nationally.
- VA Puget Sound staff published numerous articles concerning Post-Deployment reintegration, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury.

Center for Polytrauma Care

Polytrauma provides care for Veterans and returning service members with injuries to more than one physical region or organ system, one of which may be life threatening, and which results in physical, cognitive, psychological, or psychosocial impairments and functional disability.

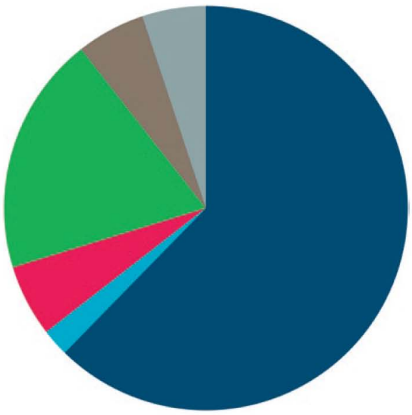
Some examples of Polytrauma include:

- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Hearing Loss
- Amputations
- Fractures
- Burns
- Visual Impairment

Teams of physicians from every relevant field plan and administer an individually tailored rehabilitation plan to help the patient recover as much as possible.

VA Puget Sound At-a-Glance

Operating Expenses



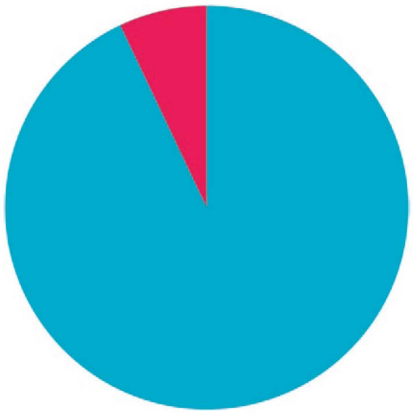
Total Operating Expenses $499,686,988

- Salary & Benefits $276,718,264
- Drugs & Medicines $18,303,888
- Other Supplies $39,014,093
- Services $107,743,230
- Consolidated Mail-Out Pharmacy (CMOP)* * $30,981,157
- Other Expenses $26,926,356

* Excludes NR Capital Expenditures

* * Reflects funds transferred to CMOP

Appropriation & MCCF



Total Appropriation & MCCF $499,686,988

- Medical Appropriation* $468,336,210
- MCCF Collections $31,350,778

ACCREDITED PROGRAMS

- VA Puget Sound is fully accredited by The Joint Commission for Hospital, Behavioral Health Care, Long Term Care and Home Care programs. VA Puget Sound is also fully accredited for two Opioid Treatment programs.
- CARF International, previously known as the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, accredits four programs at VA Puget Sound: inpatient rehabilitation, blind rehabilitation, spinal cord injury care, and employment and community services. All programs have active 3-year accreditations from recent surveys.
- The College of American Pathologists has also accredited VA Puget Sound and ensures laboratories maintain high standards. CAP accreditation improves patient safety by advancing the quality of pathology and laboratory services through education, standard setting, and ensuring laboratories meet or exceed regulatory requirements.

PATIENT SATISFACTION

Inpatient Satisfaction Scores for 2008

	Access	Coordination of Care	Courtesy	Ed & Information	Emotional Su
VA Puget Sound	87.4	84	93.1	70.9	67.9
VISN 20 Avg	85.5	83	93.5	73.5	70.6
VHA Avg	81.49	78.95	90.59	68.76	66.8

Outpatient Satisfaction Scores for 2008

	Access	Continuity of Care	Courtesy	Ed & Information	Emotional Support	Overal
PUG Q408	85.6	78.2	97.5	75.1	84.9	77.4
VISN 20 Avg	85.4	77.8	96.2	73.7	85	75.8
VHA Avg	82.4	75.5	95.3	72.8	83.2	75.5

EMPLOYEE SNAPSHOT

Total Number of Employees
3,459

Males: 1,466 Females: 1,993

13 employees are 20 years old or younger
15 employees are 71 years old or older
Average age is 47 years

Employment of Veterans

VETERANS	1,082	31.3% of total employment
VIETNAM VETERANS	294	27.2% of total Veterans
DISABLED VETERANS	342	31.6% of total Veterans

Employment of Women

1,993 57.6% of total employment

Ethnic Demographics

BLACK	500	14.5%
HISPANIC	109	3.2%
AMERICAN INDIAN	65	1.9%
ASIAN PACIFIC	621	18.0%
WHITE	2,164	62.6%

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Facts and figures 2008

Number of volunteers on the rolls at both stations	**1,279**
Number of hours donated by volunteers at both stations	**163,828**
Donations/Cash and In-Kind	**$610,462**

DAV Vans

AMERICAN LAKE		SEATTLE	
Passengers	Mileage	Passengers	Mileage
3,581	183,248	6,688	216,769

pport	Family Involvement	Physical Comfort	Preferences	Transition	**Overall Quality**
	81.9	86.7	78.3	76.2	**83.5**
	81	86.9	79.3	76.6	**83.9**
	76.52	83.84	75.6	71.04	**79.2**

l Coordination	Pharmacy Mailed	Pharmacy Pick-up	Preferences	Specialist Care	Visit Coordination	**Overall Quality**
	83.8	63.3	83.2	86.4	87.2	**78.7**
	79.2	64.7	82.7	83.9	84.7	**78.1**
	82.2	67.9	81.7	82.1	84.9	**78.2**

BED CAPACITY

STATISTICS 2008

230 THE NUMBER OF BEDS IN AMERICAN LAKE

274 THE NUMBER OF BEDS IN SEATTLE

FOOD SERVICE

STATISTICS 2008

Outpatient Meals
38,700

Inpatient Meals
355,512

Total food/supply cost
$1,243,300

REHABILITATION IN MOTION

NEW Regional Amputation Center of Excellence

Only seven VA's nationwide with historical excellence in amputation care have received the center of excellence designation and in 2008, VA Puget Sound was recognized as one of them. The VA Puget Sound Center of Excellence serves traumatically-injured Iraq, Afghanistan, Korean, WWII and Vietnam war-era Veterans as well as those who have undergone amputation because of diabetes and other diseases.

Recreation Therapy Outpatient Program
NEW Team River Runner Adaptive Kayaking

In February 2008, VA Puget Sound began to implement the national adaptive kayaking program which started at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in 2004. The program utilizes kayaking & aquatic activity to assist in the rehabilitation process of Veterans & active duty soldiers. Due to our program success, this opportunity has steadily been expanding to various other VA Medical Centers around the country.

21,799 THE NUMBER OF **PHYSICAL THERAPY** PATIENT VISITS IN 2008

6,629 THE NUMBER OF **OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY** PATIENT VISITS IN 2008

737 THE NUMBER OF **RECREATION THERAPY** PATIENT VISITS IN 2008

PHARMACY

STATISTICS 2008

2,888,035 outpatient 30-day fill prescriptions

1,495,527 unit doses

115,654 IVs

$49,974,901 total expenditures for the drugs, supplies and prescription mail

GOING GREEN

ACCOMPLISHMENTS THAT HELP REDUCE ENERGY CONSUMPTION

- Amount of cardboard recycled at Seattle: 250,460 lbs. American Lake estimated at around 75,000 lbs.
- Amount of yard waste (compost): 28,340 lbs at Seattle. American Lake at least 3 times as much.
- New sharps container collection and disposal process reduces waste by reusing the used sharps containers 25 times before disposal of the container.
- GEMS (Green Environmental Management System) News now in the Weekly Newsletter and displayed on the GEMS Bulletin Board.
- Building 6 American Lake Night Setback – Air conditioning equipment set to shut down at night for an approximate savings of $3,539 per year.
- Fire Line Leak Fix – Repaired fire sprinkler line that will save about $36,604 per year. Additionally, shutting off the HVAC unit in Building 6 and Building 33 at night will save approximately the same amount next year.
- Auto Air Vent Fix – Repaired a faulty auto air vent saving approximately $10,447 per year.
- Cell phone recycling program started: Unwanted cell phones are collected and donated to charity.

173,257 lbs. AMOUNT OF PAPER RECYCLED AT SEATTLE AND AMERICAN LAKE COMBINED IN 2008

204,220 lbs. AMOUNT OF METAL RECYCLED AT SEATTLE AND AMERICAN LAKE COMBINED IN 2008

6,665 lbs. BATTERIES RECYCLED IN 2008: 5645 LBS AT SEATTLE AND 1020 LBS AT AMERICAN LAKE

Community Outreach

Paying Tribute to Those Who Served

For Veterans returning from an overseas deployment, "Welcome Home" is a phrase that can mean a lot of different things. However, during a celebration this past May, more than 350 newly returning Veterans took part in a day of information sharing and golfing at the American Lake Veterans Golf Course.

The program included two golf clinics, informational briefings, and a round of golf. "Welcome Home" meant golf, food, and thanks for a job well done," said Stan Johnson, medical center director.

Along with volunteers from the golf course, the Vet Centers, the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs, the Friends of American Lake Golf Course, Madigan Army Medical Center, community groups and local leaders, VA Puget Sound hosted a contingent of soldiers from Fort Lewis's Wounded Warrior Transition Battalion to take part in the all-day golf and resource event.

"The local community was instrumental in making this event happen," said Linda Gillespie-Gately, OEF/OIF program manager for VA Puget Sound. "It just shows how important these Veterans are to so many people. Business leaders, community leaders, they all wanted to show their support to the Veterans." She adds, "Col. Karl Bolton's leadership with the battalion and his passion for his units made this a great success."

For half of the soldiers, the day began with a handful of classes on how to play the game of golf, from swinging a club to course etiquette. Following the classes, the soldiers began a nine-hole tournament.

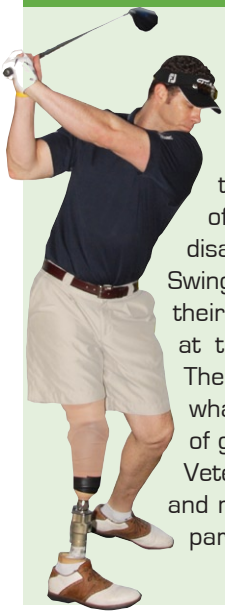
"The golf course was originally created as a rehabilitative therapeutic tool," said Mike Kearney, community volunteer and manager of the American Lake Veterans Golf Course. "But, we wanted this event to be about more than just golf. It's about the sacrifices Veterans make and how we as a community can give back to them."

Events like this, part of a national VA program to extend a hand to Veterans, offer a chance for local communities and leaders to show their appreciation and give thanks to those who made the choice to serve their country.

"The theme, "Paying Tribute to Those Who Served", is really a testament to what we try to do here everyday," said Gillespie-Gately. "These soldiers who came out today really are such special men and women. Most of them are going to be leaving the military soon, and we just want to ensure they have the resources available to them to be successful in the civilian world."

VA Puget Sound staff attended or hosted more than 30 similar outreach events in Western Washington during 2008. While many were informational fairs for Veterans to learn about what services are offered, some were part of a larger health-screening effort that gave returning combat Veterans the opportunity to speak with a medical provider, mental health practitioner or social worker.

5th Annual First Swing Seminar & Adaptive Golf Clinic at American Lake



Using golf as an aid in the rehabilitation and improving the quality of life of Veterans with disabilities, the First Swing Program held their 5th Annual seminar and adaptive golf clinic at the American Lake Veterans Golf Course. The program allows all individuals no matter what their abilities to participate in the game of golf. More than 85 inpatient and outpatient Veterans-including active duty soldiers, 30 golf and rehab professionals and over 40 volunteers participated in 2008.

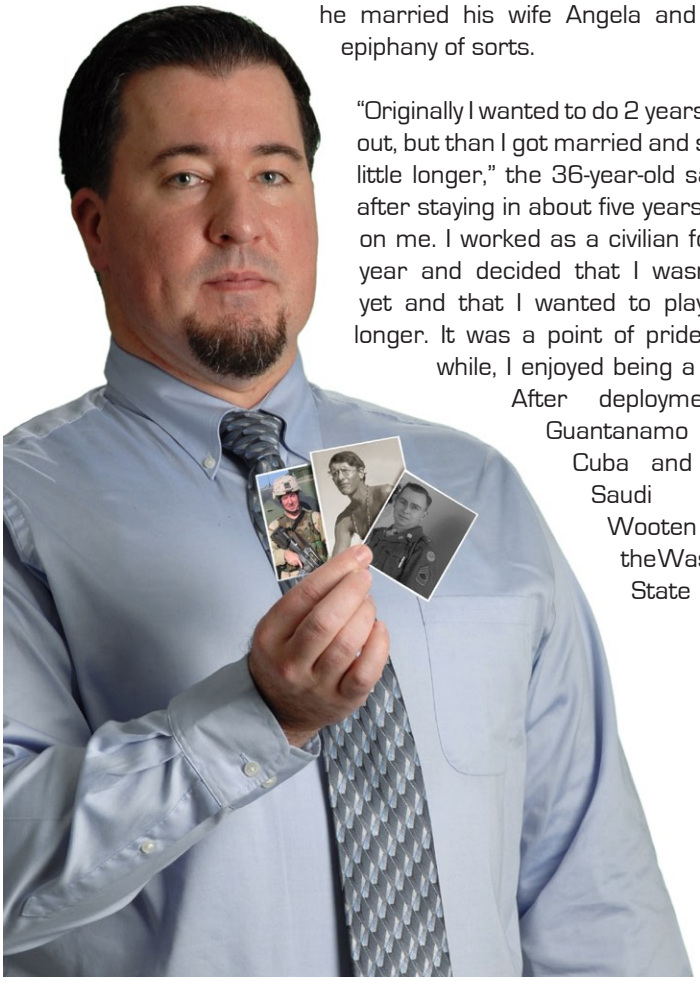
Care Across Generations

A family's heritage of military service and utilization of VA care

For more than 230 years, we as a nation have sent our fathers, son, uncles, daughters, mothers, aunts, next door neighbors, and family friends of to war. They have made a commitment to defend this county by serving in the military and defending our rights and freedoms. For many it was a sense of duty or a calling of a higher meaning. But for some, military life runs in their family's blood.

Zach Wooten, a personnel assistant at VA Puget Sound, belongs to one of those families. His grandfather served in the US Army during World War II. His father served in Vietnam, as did his step-father. His brother enlisted in the Marine Corps and Wooten himself spent 15 years serving in the US Army and Washington State National Guard. With three young daughters, he says, "Who knows," Maybe one of them will grow up and join. It wouldn't surprise me. My oldest daughter especially, she still remembers saluting the flag and me in uniform."

As a Washington native, service to country came naturally. Wooten graduated from Kentridge High School and had plans to attend Central Washington University. However, when scholarships couldn't cover the cost of tuition, Zach and his twin brother decided to join the Army. His brother changed his mind, but ended up enlisting in the Marine Corps a couple of years later. Wooten originally planned on spending two years on active duty and heading to college. However, he married his wife Angela and had an epiphany of sorts.



"Originally I wanted to do 2 years and get out, but than I got married and stayed in little longer," the 36-year-old said. "But after staying in about five years, it grew on me. I worked as a civilian for about year and decided that I wasn't done yet and that I wanted to play a little longer. It was a point of pride after a while, I enjoyed being a solider." After deployments to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Wooten joined theWashington State National Guard. His unit was called to deploy to Iraq in 2004. "It was definitely interesting, going actually into a combat zone for the first time," said Wooten of his deployment to Camp Anaconda near Balad, Iraq. "My jobs were site security or provisional infantry, where we did some infantry stuff like looking for [Improvised Explosive Devices], conducting patrols on foot, and doing the basic stuff like stopping traffic, searching people going in and out of the bases, detaining people on watch lists."

"There were too many medical issues after Iraq, neck and back and some other things, so I was medically retired in 06," he said. "I do use [VA Puget Sound] for care and I have noticed a difference between when I first sought care in 1995 when I got off of active duty, and now. It was like night and day. I have nothing but success and good things to say. The Polytrauma Clinic has been great. I have been through the Pain Care Center and Neurology Clinics and have nothing but good things to say."

Having time to look back at his military service, Wooten realizes how unique it is to have a family military heritage that stretches back generations, and how proud he is to have continued his family's tradition of service. His father John Wooten is now a retired and divides his time between Washington State and Arizona. "My dad was drafted into the Army in 1969 and was assigned to a long range reconnaissance patrol unit as soon as he got to Vietnam," he said. "My dad was proud of us joining. That was when he finally opened up about his military service. He pulled out a bunch of pictures, that I had never had seen and showed me a uniform that I never knew he had."

Before that, Wooten's grandfather Eugene Alfonsin spent his adult life as part of the New York National Guard, including deployments to Europe after World War II as part of the stabilization force. But for Wooten, the idea of military service is more than just a family tradition; it's a calling to serve your country. "It was always humbling when someone would just stop thank you when I was in uniform" he said. "I still think it is one of the most honorable professions you can do. I enjoyed the patriotism. As a kid, I always admired the military. I went to the parades and was fascinated with it. I never planned to serve, but in the back of mind I think I always knew it was an option. I think it's really neat to be part of a family heritage."

Research

Breakthroughs in Medicine

The Research and Development program is a reflection of the VA Puget Sound's commitment to providing the highest quality of care to its Veterans. It is also an integral part of the affiliation with the University of Washington, bringing their premier academic medicine program to VA Puget Sound's health care system while ensuring that professional staff and quality of care is of the highest caliber.

The effects of a strong Research and Development program go well beyond recruitment of high quality staff. VA Puget Sound patients have access to the latest pharmaceutical therapies and diagnostic techniques; the quality of routine care is enriched by the personal commitment of staff to increase the professional capabilities and to actively contribute to the advancement of their fields.

Research at VA Puget Sound in 2008

Some of the nation's most prominent researchers reside at VA Puget Sound, one of the largest VA funded research programs in the country. In 2008, VA Puget Sound had 165 principal investigators with over 650 active research projects. These principal investigators represent virtually every major clinical department. VA Puget Sound received more than $33 million in VA and non-VA funding in 2008. This strong, diversified base of support maintains the competitive edge of VA Puget Sound as a leader in world-class research for such areas as hypertension, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, prosthetics and amputee care, rehabilitation, mental health, neuro-degenerative disorders, obesity, cancer, and pulmonary diseases.

VA Puget Sound includes programs of significant importance to Veterans such as post traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, multiple sclerosis, limb loss prevention and prosthetics and Hepatitis C. An additional research focus on areas such as spinal cord injuries and rehabilitation medicine, mental health, addictions treatment, health services/ translational research, and deployment health issues highlight VA Puget Sound's leadership in many areas of research to enhance state-of-the-art diagnoses and treatment to Veteran patients.

$33 million

TOTAL RESEARCH DOLLARS IN FY 2008

VA Funds
49.5%, $16.4 million

Seattle Institute for Biomedical and Clinical Research (SIBCR)
15.6%, $5.1 million

University of Washington
32.3%, $10.6 million

Other
2.6%, $1 million

Treating the Invisible Wounds of War

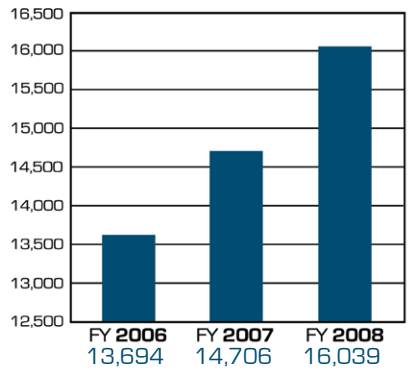
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

VA Puget Sound's mental health services implemented a number of new programs in 2008 to meet the needs of the Veterans who come to VA Puget Sound dealing with the invisible wounds of war.

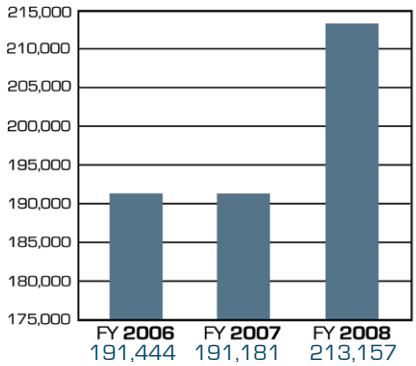
2008 Highlights

- VA Puget Sound is bringing mental health services to where Veterans live by the addition of mental health staff in Valor CBOC's, on the Mobile Medical Unit and at new Northwest Washington interim CBOC. Tele-technology is also being used to reach Veterans living in rural areas or who have trouble traveling.
- Implementation of the national VA Mental Health Uniform Benefits Package.
- Increased staff as part of the national Mental Health Enhancement Initiative.
- Began the process for a new mental health building at the Seattle Division.

NUMBER OF VETERANS SERVED



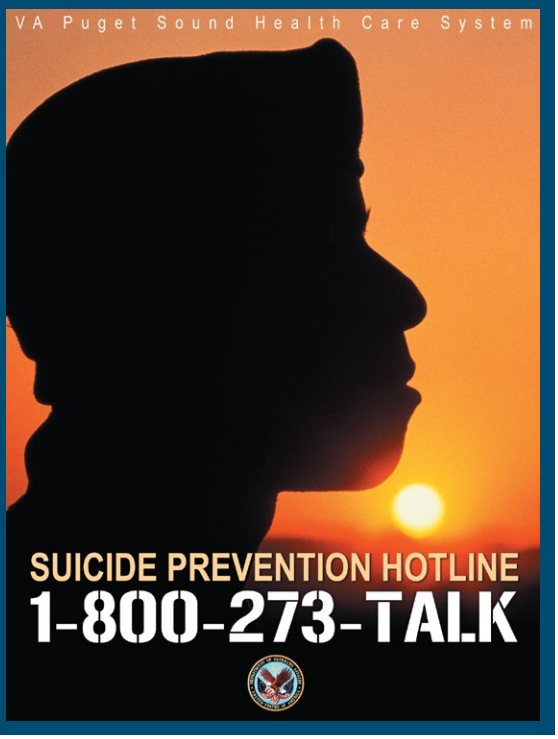
NUMBER OF PATIENT VISITS



SUICIDE PREVENTION

VA Puget Sound recognizes the growing issue of suicide for Veterans and has begun an aggressive suicide prevention program. In 2008, VA Puget Sound's focus has been "Suicide is Everyone's Business". Throughout the year activities included:

- Suicide Prevention Week to increase contact and promote education for Veterans, staff and visitors.
- Operation SAVE training provided to more than 1,800 non clinical staff. Online training for clinical providers ongoing since September.
- More than 20 community outreach events for both suicide prevention and Operation SAVE reaching both Veterans and the community.
- Required suicide prevention, documentation and reporting systems added to VA's Computerized Patient Record System.
- Creation of Suicide Risk Reduction Committee: Multi-discipline group of clinicians meet monthly to address all suicide policy development and perform review of high risk for suicide Veterans.



Systems Redesign is an initiative to look at time management and the efficient use of resources in a new way. By systematically analyzing and adjusting the way patients are scheduled and personnel are managed, VA Puget Sound hopes to reduce waiting times for appointments, increase staff efficiency and ultimately improve the patient's clinical experience.

These Systems Redesign principles are being adopted throughout VA Puget Sound, and many Veterans have already seen a dramatic decrease in the amount of time they have to wait for an appointment. Wait times have already decreased for most of VA Puget Sound's clinics and some have achieved the facility-wide goal of providing same-day access for appointments.

System redesign works for American Lake urology department and their patients

Faced with a long list of patients waiting to be seen, the urology team at VA Puget Sound's American Lake division decided that changes were necessary. They wanted to continue their high level of interpersonal customer service while treating patients effectively and efficiently.

Early on, the team decided the changes must be done with the patients at the center of their efforts. "If we are all in this vehicle together, it is going to move forward whether we like it or not," said urology nurse Jennifer Acselrod. "If change is inevitable, why not jump into the driver's seat and steer it in a direction that would produce optimal results?"

Taking the wheel meant that numerous changes needed to occur not only with the organization but also with the staff. "It didn't happen overnight," says urologist Paul Axford, MD. "Not only did we need create a new formal system to see patients, we also needed enthusiasm from the staff," he added. They were fortunate to have that enthusiasm already.

Having the right staffing resources and organization was also important. Once the team achieved the right staff in the right roles, the clinic's wait list started dwindling. With the addition of Ms. Acselrod, nurse coordinator, to the team, the physician assistant, was able to dramatically increase the number of patients he saw per week, which in turn allowed the urologist to maximize his surgery time.

Over the course of several months, the team was able to chip away at the waiting list until they were able to start seeing patients on a "same day" basis. Additionally, when a staff member is gone, other team members are trained to step in and assist whether it be through check-in or triaging patient needs.

As recently as July 2007, a same-day request to be seen involved an average wait of one month. Since May 2008, 95 per cent of the patients who requested same-day access that met referral criteria were seen the same day as their originating primary care appointment

In keeping with Veteran-centric care, same-day access now eliminates an extra trip to the medical center for the Veteran, thus saving time, gas and extra visit co-payments. "We had Veterans coming in from all over western Washington," said program support assistant Sue Couch, "and they really don't need to be making extra trips."

The urology team's success is owed in part to the larger "systems redesign" initiative going on across the VA Northwest Health Network. The basic concept of systems redesign is to implement critical changes to the patient care system in order to improve patient flow, match provider supply with patient demand, and to optimize the level of care provided to patients. "Dr. Frank Marre's (Chief Medical Officer for VA Northwest Health Network) vision for a system redesign challenged the entire region to accept the changes for a more efficient & effective work environment and integrate it to their specific clinics to see positive results," said Acselrod. "Obviously, we took on the challenge".

The urology team stressed that communication between members about their patients is crucial. Besides giving the Veterans control of their appointment times, the team follows up with Veterans before their appointments. These contacts have helped to reduce their "no show" rates by almost 70%.

Now that service demand is being met at the American Lake urology department, patients who call for an appointment are given their choice of days and times to be seen instead of a date several weeks into the future. The team's success in increasing patient access to services team recently reported their success to the VA Northwest Health Network leadership this fall.

The team has begun working with other departments (such as surgery, lab services, and imaging) to improve urology patient access in those areas. "This is really an advanced principle of changing how you treat your patients that is, in turn, spread to other departments that impact your work," said Molly Aldassy, RN, who is coordinating the systems redesign initiative, "really redesigning the system with the improvement of patient access as the goal."

VA PUGET SOUND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

VISN 20 Core Values

Trust
Respect
Excellence
Compassion
Commitment

Mission Statement

Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

Vision Statement

To be a patient-centered integrated health care organization for Veterans providing excellent health care, research and education; an organization where people choose to work; an active community partner; and a back up for National emergencies.

Executive Leadership

Stan Johnson
Director

DeAnn Dietrich
Deputy Director

Sherri Bauch
Assistant Director

Gordon A. Starkebaum, MD
Chief of Staff

Frankie Manning
Associate Director of Nursing Services

Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC)

Bremerton
925 Adele Avenue
Bremerton, WA 98312
Telephone: (360) 782-0129 Fax: (360) 377-8029

Port Angeles
1005 Georgianna Street
Port Angeles, WA 98362
Telephone: (360) 565-9330 Fax: (360) 457-0618

Mount Vernon
(Temporary location until Summer 2009)
Cedar Grove Building B, 2031-C Hospital Drive
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284
Telephone: (360) 856-4700 Fax: (360) 856-9080

Bellevue (Valor Healthcare)
13033 Bel-Red Road, Suite 210
Bellevue, Washington 98005
Telephone: (425) 214-1055 Fax: (425) 453-1619

Federal Way (Valor Healthcare)
34617 11th Place South, Suite 301
Federal Way, WA 98003
Telephone: (253) 336-4142 Fax: (253) 838-3006

North Seattle (Valor Healthcare)
12360 Lake City Way NE, Suite 200
Seattle, WA 98125
Telephone: (206) 384-4382 Fax: (206) 440-3137

The Deployment Health Clinic

Seattle
Deployment Health Clinic Coordinator: (206) 764-2636
Within Washington state: (800) 329-8387
Outside of Washington state: (877) 222-8387
General Scheduling: (206) 764-2306

American Lake
American Lake Deployment Health Clinic: (253) 583-1176
Within Washington state: (800) 329-8387
Outside of Washington state : (877) 222-8387

Women's Health Clinic

Seattle: (206) 768-5314
American Lake: (253) 589-4045

Veterans Centers

Bellingham: (360) 733-9226
Seattle: (206) 553-2706
Spokane: (509) 444-8387
Tacoma (253) 565-7038
Yakima: (509) 457-2736