



October 2009

VISN 19 Network Director Update

Glen W. Grippen



VA Secretary Shinseki

new Post-9/11 GI Bill. (10/28/09)

[VA, DoD Host National Mental Health Summit](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense are hosting a first-of-its-kind national summit to address the mental health care needs of America's military personnel, families and Veterans, harnessing the programs, resources and expertise of both departments to deal with the aftermath of the battlefield. (10/26/09)

[Secretary Announces Expansion of Veterans Appeals Board](#) - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the addition of four new Veterans Law Judges to the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA), which will enable the board to increase the number of cases being decided. (10/21/09)

[U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and U.S. Olympic Committee Launch Paralympic Community Initiative to Serve Physically Disabled Veterans](#) - Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) signed a memorandum of understanding to provide Paralympic sport programming and additional community support, including funding and resources, to injured service members and Veterans across the country. (10/21/09)

[VA Contacting Veteran-Students about New GI Bill](#) - Representatives of the Department of Veterans Affairs will be telephoning Veterans across the country to

National News: (Click on titles to read full press release)

[VA Seeks Temporary Contractor to Help Process Education Claims](#) - On Oct. 21, the Department of Veterans Affairs issued a solicitation for temporary contractor support to assist in processing the increased volume of education claims received since implementing the

explain their education benefits under the new Post-911 GI Bill and ensure beneficiaries are able to receive payments due them (10/19/09)

[Secretary Shinseki Announces New Gravesite Locator](#) - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced today that the Department of Veterans Affairs has made the gravesites of more than 6.7 million Veterans easier to locate using handheld devices with Internet capability, such as "smart phones." (10/16/09)

[VA Deputy Highlights Bond between Defense and Veterans Affairs](#) - An innovative, far-sighted partnership between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense will improve the health care system for Veterans and dramatically change the way health care is delivered to all Americans, according to Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs W. Scott Gould (10/16/09)

[Secretary Shinseki Designates 41 Regional Veterans Day Sites](#) - As Chairman of the Veterans Day National Committee, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced today the designation of 41 regional Veterans Day observances. These sites are model community events for the observance of Veterans Day 2009. (10/15/09)

[VA Extends "Agent Orange" Benefits to More Veterans](#) - Relying on an independent study by the Institute of Medicine, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki decided to establish a service-connection for Vietnam Veterans with three specific illnesses based on the latest evidence of an association with the herbicides referred to Agent Orange (10/13/09)

[Deputy Secretary Gould Talks Strategies for Federal Performance](#) - Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs W. Scott Gould told federal government managers at an "Excellence in Government" conference Oct. 5 that "President Obama and Secretary Shinseki have committed resources and capital to invest in delivering high quality services and benefits to our Veterans. Transforming requires investing in people, new business processes and the power of information technology to improve outcomes for Veterans." (10/6/09)

[Secretary Shinseki Announces \\$17 Million in Homeless Grants](#) - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki has announced that 19 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico will share more than \$17 million in grants to community groups to create 1,155 beds for homeless Veterans this year. (10/6/09)

[VA Goes Green](#) - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki has announced a new "Green Routine" campaign to kick off Energy Awareness Month at the Department of Veterans Affairs. The campaign is designed to increase the awareness among VA employees of their environmental impact as individuals and as members of the federal government. (10/5/09)

[Veterans Give High Marks to VA Pharmacies](#) - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced J.D. Power and Associates, a firm specializing in consumer surveys, has given VA pharmacies some of the highest customer satisfaction scores in a national sampling of pharmacy customers. (10/1/09)

VISN 19:



Glen Grippen

Updates on our four rural health projects:

Primary Care Telehealth Outreach Clinics (PCTOCs)

Telehealth Equipment: Delivery of Provider site equipment is en route to the facilities and the delivery of patient site equipment will start the first week of November.

For the CBOCs where there is one provider on site, a Primary Care Cart Configuration has been ordered to enable maximum flexibility, optimize equipment use, and support the CBOC via telehealth if the one provider cannot be present for some reason.

PCTOC Project Staffing Update:

- 24 positions - Filled
- 17 positions – Certificate Issued
- 44 positions – Pending being posted
- 24 Positions - Posted

PCTOC Telehealth Training: for new staff has been developed. Telemedicine basics training, and specific Primary Care and Specialty care training on basics and specific peripherals are top priority. Ongoing training will be provided using Train the Trainer concepts. The

first Train the trainer activities was completed October 14-15, 2009.

PCTOC Space, Locations/Leases Update:

- Montana
 - Plentywood Hospital interested, solicitation prepared
 - Hamilton – Hospital interested. Tentative date for meeting scheduled 1st week in November.
- Cheyenne
 - Rawlins, WY – Reviewing bid offer
- ECHCS
 - Salida, CO – Ribbon Cutting/Grand Opening ceremony scheduled for Dec. 15, 2009.
- Grand Junction
 - Moab, UT- possible site found. Finalizing build out specifications for the Moab site.
 - Glenwood Springs, CO – Still looking, staff is visiting 7 potential sites in Glenwood first week of November.
- SLC
 - Idaho Falls and Price – Reviewing bids
- Sheridan
 - Evanston and Worland – Reviewing bids.

General Telehealth – Specialty Consultations:

This project is finalizing a Specialty Scheduling System / consult management systems to manage both inter and intra facility consults and all the related activities for a telehealth visit: service agreements, clinic set-up/scheduling, consult templates, progress note templates, communication and follow-up.

Extended Education and Wellness – Oversight Committee has been established. Patient education staff hired and on station at ECHCS. They are finalizing a Tele-Patient Ed Scheduling System / consult management systems to manage both inter and intra facility consults and all the related activities for a telehealth visit: service agreements, clinic set-up/scheduling, consult templates, progress note templates, communication and follow-up.

vICU Project: Name changed to (Virtual) vICU

The vICU Project Telehealth Equipment has been ordered and is on the way to the facility sites. The staff is starting collaboration with the remote ICU sites via telephone. And a SharePoint vICU Utilization Survey is collecting information on contact information and satisfaction. The CIS has been contracted and expect installation and operations by March 2010.

Cheyenne Mobile Tele-Primary Care –Enrollment continues to grow. The team has faced some equipment challenges, related repairs and site location challenges. The mobile staff is working hard to resolve the problems/challenges and keep the following schedule as planned.

- Sterling, CO, Tuesday clinics.
- Torrington, WY, Thursday clinics.
- Laramie, WY, starting Nov. 6, for Friday clinics.
- Wheatland, WY will start on Dec. 2 for Wednesday Clinics.

VISN 19 Hosts new DUSHOM

VISN 19 hosted the new Deputy Under Secretary for Health, Operations and Management (DUSHOM) in Denver October 26, 2009 for an integrated visit and briefings of VISN 19, Denver VAMC, the Health Administration Center, Office of Information & Technology, the Veterans Benefits Office and VHA Contracting.



Left to right: Glen Grippen, Armando Diaz de Leon, William Schoenhard and Lynette Roff.

PVA/VA Volunteer of the Year



Ms. Patti Breneman, VISN 19 was recently chosen as VA Volunteer of the Year by the Mountain States Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. She received an award at the Annual Membership and

Sponsorship Appreciation Banquet Friday Oct 2nd. Congratulations, Patti!

National Cemetery Administration Update:

Recently, questions were raised about the status of national cemeteries in Colorado. The VA National Cemetery Administration (VA NCA) provided the following information on two topics.

Additional land for Fort Logan: NCA is making plans to begin a search for a Ft. Logan successor site during the first quarter of FY 2010. A draft notice expressing VA’s intent to search for land is being prepared for release. NCA is also developing a columbarium wall with niches for cremated remains on existing land at Ft. Logan National Cemetery.

Land for national cemetery in/near Colorado Springs: Legislation has been introduced in both the House and Senate to direct VA to establish a veteran’s cemetery in El Paso County. Currently, the criteria VA has adopted and Congress has endorsed for determining the need for new national cemeteries require that there be at least 170,000 veterans not currently served by a burial option in a national or state veterans cemetery residing within 75 miles of the proposed site. Colorado Springs doesn’t meet these requirements because of the proximity of Ft. Logan National Cemetery. Nonetheless, NCA officials have visited land in Fountain retained by El Paso County for potential veterans cemetery use. NCA says this property, known as the “Kane Ranch,” would need an in-depth analysis, including an environmental assessment, before VA could acquire the land.

VA NCA POC: Mr. Elton Wooten 303-914- 5709.

ECHCS



Denver, CO – Replacement Medical Center Facility:

The Denver VAMC has committed to providing a weekly update on the status of the Denver Replacement Hospital. These updates are distributed via e-mail every Monday and can also be found on <http://www.denver.va.gov/projecteagle/index.asp>.

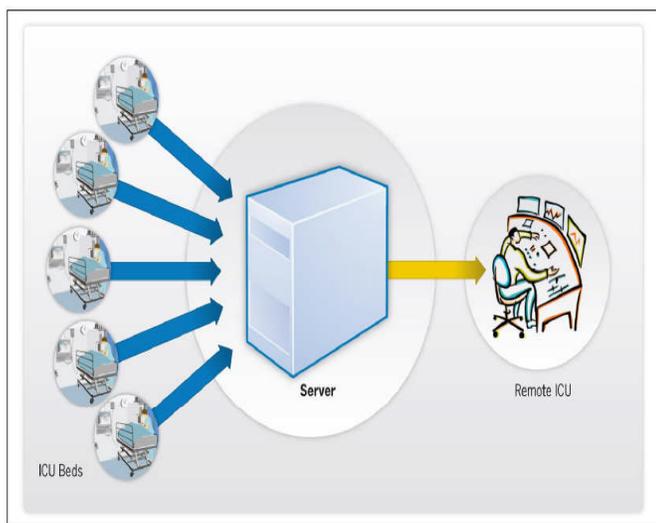
Denver VAMC Implements Brand New Virtual ICU Program

On Tuesday, October 13, the VISN 19 Virtual Intensive Care Unit went live!

The VICU, as it's called, is a virtual rapid response team that coordinates and provides real time consultation and collaboration to RN staff at rural facilities throughout VISN 19. This program is part of VHA's Rural health Initiative. Denver was selected as a pilot site for this program because of the challenges with access to care throughout ECHCS.

As part of this program, a Critical Care nurse carries a designated cell phone and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for consultation, collaboration and support to the VISN 19 care centers. Once per shift, the VICU RN contacts rural sites via the cell phone and point-to-point video conferencing to discuss current clinical issues, patient status, and any care needs. The VICU RN also coordinates rapid response consultation and collaboration to staff at rural facilities. In doing so, the RN can establish immediate remote video conferencing between specialists in Denver and the hospitalists at the rural sites.

The result? This incredible program promotes collegial relationships between staff at all VISN hospitals, and improves the quality of care to critical care services in rural and highly rural sites. VISN 19 can reduce fee basis costs for critical care services as well as frequency and costs of patient transfers. This program provides early physician intervention and increased collaboration among nursing and medical staff in all VISN 19 hospitals, and also increased patient satisfaction. Better care, quicker, and in more places...that is what the VICU is all about.



Centralized model of remote access to ICU data

VA Montana Health Care System:



VA Montana Healthcare System held their dedication ceremony for the new Billings CBOC on Friday, October 16, 2009. The room was filled to standing room only with staff, guests and veteran's organization members. Senator Jon Tester was the guest speaker.



Left to right: Jim Corson, representative for Senator Baucus, Glen Grippen, Senator Tester

Senator Tester shared his story of visiting the old clinic and having to go outside to get to a different part of the building as he recalled the tight quarters. He reinforced that this new clinic is a welcome change for both employees and Veterans.

Susan Fuehrer, Acting Director, VA Montana Healthcare System was the master of ceremony. Other guest speakers were VISN 19 Director Glen

Grippen, staff representatives for US Senator Max Baucus and US Congressman Denny Rehberg.

Construction continues in the physical therapy space at Fort Harrison. It will be finished by the end of December, 2009. The 7,200 square foot lab expansion at Fort Harrison is also nearing completion with potential be complete in February. The twenty four bed mental health inpatient facility at Fort Harrison should be awarded in a couple weeks.

VA Montana Healthcare System is interviewing for a new Director following Joe Underkofler's retirement.

Sheridan VAMC:



The Sheridan VAMC continues to look around the state to expand healthcare to Veterans. The Gillette Community Based Outpatient Clinic moved to its new location (604 Express Drive) in late September. The clinic was built by the Kuehne Foundation and has been leased to the Sheridan VAMC. Because of the generosity of the foundation, the new Gillette CBOC is a state of the art clinic and nearly twice the size of the original clinic.

Work is nearly complete for the new Rock Springs CBOC (1401 Gateway Blvd.) The original clinic on College Drive was opened nearly five years ago. Due to the increase in the number of Veterans who use the clinic, the VA will be moving in to the larger space the end of November.

The next clinic to open will be in Afton. This clinic will be an outreach clinic and will use telehealth technology along with a provider and a clerk. The VA has held enrollment and flu shot clinics in the Afton area with great response from the community. The staff is looking forward to opening the clinic early in 2010.

VASLCHCS:

The typical patient in a VA emergency room is a 78 year old man so imagine the surprise of the staff at the George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center in Salt Lake City when they realized they were about to admit their youngest female patient ever. How young you ask...newborn baby young! That's right on October 21, 2009 the ER staff in Salt Lake City delivered a bouncing baby girl! Yes...a baby born at the VA, very exciting and only the third one ever in VA history.



The woman did not speak English and her friends brought her to the VA Medical Center by mistake. She was in the late stages of labor and there was no time for questions. Kudos to the staff

who admittedly were a little rusty but jumped into action and helped little Sarah enter the world. Our VA baby is now famous and so is the Salt Lake ER staff thanks to a lot of positive media coverage. Baby Sarah is also one lucky little girl. She now has more aunts, uncles, grandmas and grandpas than anyone else we know. We are very proud of the outstanding performance by VASLCHCS staff!

On October 28th, 2009 the VASLCHCS entered a new phase in its commitment to veterans after breaking ground on a brand new outpatient mental health clinic.



A local OIF veteran provided the keynote speech and eloquently stated the clinic would become so much more than just a building, it would be a "sanctuary" for so many veterans struggling with "combat demons".



Photo of Andrew Figorski/OIF Veteran

This particular veteran receives much needed services from the VA and is also an employee of the VASLCHCS. The new facility will house over a 150 therapists dedicated to helping these wartime heroes reclaim their lives. It should officially open its doors sometime in January of 2011.

Grand Junction VAMC:



The Grand Junction VA Medical Center participated in the Grand Valley's sixth annual Stand Down for homeless and at risk Veterans. This year, the event was organized by the facility's new homeless program coordinator and featured several new community partners. The event had thirty stations in total that offered everything from flu shots to vocational rehabilitation programs and winter clothing. In addition, the new community partners were able to offer parallel services for those non-Veterans who showed up at the event. Veterans receive priority from 9 a.m. to noon, with the remaining homeless community served from noon to 2 p.m. The event provided services for 151 Veterans and about 55 homeless from the community at large. Following the Veterans Stand Down, volunteers and organizations stayed to offer the same services to non-veteran and At Risk and Homeless from the community at large.



Volunteers sort through DoD surplus boots given to homeless and at risk Veterans who attended the sixth annual Stand Down. For the first time in the events history, every piece of clothing was given away.

Regional media gave the Stand Down good pre-event coverage and as a result, a few veterans traveled long distances to receive services. This included one from Four Corners, Arizona, a few from Utah and at least one from just west of Glenwood Springs, Colorado. The homeless population in the valley has nearly doubled as energy field production has slowed and surrounding communities are no longer able to provide many social services due to a reduced tax base.



The media coverage during the Grand Junction Veteran's Stand Down was substantial with all three local television stations covering the event. Of particular interest to the media was the addition of several new community partners and additional VA provided services such as Suicide Prevention. Sonja Encke, gave an extensive interview to one television station.

Construction also continues at the Medical Center with ground broke on a building that will house surgeons offices and the craft therapy program. When complete the building will be just over 4,000 square feet.



Construction Continues: Contractors walk a trench dug to pour a foundation for a building which will house surgeons offices and craft therapy at the Grand Junction VA Medical Center. Construction is expected to continue on several projects for the next five years.

The facility is also nearing the end of its seasonal flu vaccine program. As part of the program, in addition to regular and special clinics at the Medical Center and its two satellite clinics, staff also travelled to Glenwood Springs Colo. and Moab, Utah to conduct combined flu shot/outreach clinics which were very successful in attracting veterans who were qualified for care, but not enrolled.

“Lance Knight” the Medical Center’s Flu Shot Mascot was not only well known around the facility, but also got to travel to Glenwood Springs, Colo. and Moab, Utah for special flu shot/outreach clinics that brought in several new patients. He also got an “upgrade” when a staff member with a strange sense of humor modified his information sign.



Cheyenne VAMC:



The surgical expansion project at the Cheyenne VAMC has taken form this past month with the entire major steel framework going up over the Columbus Day weekend. In fact, the construction crew woke up to tackle this task with a very strong and early fall blizzard bearing down on Cheyenne. At this point, work moved briskly along in order to install all of the required supporting structural steel.

As you read this update, interior work continues on additional infrastructure such as internal walls, HVAC systems and more. In the very near future, we expect that the exterior walls will be completed, and then crews will move their work inside where two new state-of-the-art operating rooms are scheduled to be opened in the late spring of 2010.

