

VISION

for Excellence

SPRING | 2011



HOMES *for* HEROES



THE LEBANON VA MEDICAL
CENTER IS FOSTERING HEALTHIER
LIFESTYLES FOR VETERANS IN
NEED OF A HELPING HAND

STORY ON
PAGE 8

Director's Vision



Dear Veterans, fellow employees, volunteers and friends of VISN 4:

In VISN 4 we all work hard to provide our Veterans with the best care they can receive anywhere, across the full continuum of health care—from timely compensation and pension exams to offering supportive living environments and helping our Veterans fall asleep at night well beyond our facility walls. Simply put, we aim to deliver the best and most personalized medical care possible.

Our cover story (page 8) highlights care for Veterans needing help with independent living. The medical foster home program at the Lebanon VA Medical Center, the first in VISN 4, places Veterans in the homes of local families where they can enjoy the support and companionship of people who care.

VISN 4 is also pioneering a few telehealth programs (page 7) that save Veterans from potentially hazardous, long drives for appointments by allowing them to communicate with their doctors through teleconferencing. It's all part of delivering the best care anywhere and everywhere!

Innovative care also means connecting with Veterans and their families in new ways. VISN 4 is leading the Nation in our use of social media initiatives which allow us to connect with Veterans anywhere there is an Internet connection (page 16). Join us (and "like us") on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

Our VISN 4 community supports the care and dignity of our Veterans even off the job—giving back through the Combined Federal Campaign and the 2011 Wheelchair Games, hosted by VA Pittsburgh this August (page 6).

These efforts are part of what makes me so proud of our organization, its employees and volunteers—the way we provide the best possible continuum of care for our Nation's heroes. I hope you feel that same pride as you read these pages.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael E. Moreland".

**MICHAEL E. MORELAND, FACHE
NETWORK DIRECTOR**



What's Inside Issue 9?

Around the Network	3
Total Team Effort	6
Cover Story: A Place to Call Home	8
Telehealth	13
Construction Highlights	16

AROUND the NETWORK

OEF/OIF/OND

VA is transitioning to cater to our newest soldiers

VISN 4 is reaching out to service members who recently returned from Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn in Iraq. Shortened to OEF/OIF/OND, these heroes are a top priority.

VISN 4 recently selected Gretchen Roberts to serve as the full-time OEF/OIF/OND coordinator. Previously this was a collateral duty. Roberts, a social worker, is responsible for overseeing the delivery of care and outreach efforts for our newest Veterans. In the past year, Roberts, along with the OEF/OIF/OND program managers at each VISN 4 facility, has worked closely with the Pennsylvania National Guard to ensure that returning service members know how to take advantage of the benefits available to them. Roberts is striving to also form a close partnership with the West Virginia and Delaware National Guards.



Another VISN 4 priority has been to increase the number of Post-Deployment Health Re-Assessments (PDHRAs) held at VISN 4 facilities, rather than the typical PDHRAs hosted at military institutions. “We really want to broaden these at our own facilities,” said Roberts.



LEADING HR

VISN 4's Human Resources Manager, Stan Pakutz, recently retired after nearly four decades of government service

Michelle Dominski has since taken on the role of overseeing the human resources functions for the network.

Dominski encourages all to work for VA

“Not only is it personally rewarding to care for our Nation's heroes, but the government offers many employee benefits such as a premium health insurance program, an outstanding leave policy, a three-part retirement program, and various other flexibilities and special incentives.”

Dominski's Mission

“VA employees make up one of the most dedicated and proud workforces. I want to ensure that the ten VISN 4 medical centers are uniformly recruiting and retaining the best employees to take care of our Veteran population, as well as supporting the overall mission of caring for Veterans.”

Dominski's Biggest Challenge

“Human Resources is a continuously evolving entity within the Department of Veterans Affairs.”

COST SAVINGS

VISN 4 is an innovative leader in maximizing the impact of every dollar spent

Last year VISN 4 saved \$31.6 million, freeing up more resources to provide outstanding health care to our region's Veterans. VISN 4's Regional Preferred Pricing system allows VISN 4 to negotiate with community health care providers for the best deal and is saving the VISN more and more money each year—\$8.4 million last year. Pharmacy initiatives saved an additional \$7.7 million and millions more were saved by VISN 4's tightly-run construction and capital management programs.

VISN 4's effective cost-saving programs are helping to ensure we provide the best possible health care to our Veterans and get maximum value for taxpayer dollars.



WELCOME, MR. DALPIAZ!

A new director is leading the Philadelphia VA Medical Center into the future

HEROES AT HEINZ FIELD

VISN 4 partners with the Steelers every fall to honor Veterans



On Sept. 14, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans and their families joined the Pittsburgh Steelers for the third annual Heroes at Heinz Field event. Veterans and their guests had a chance to catch passes, kick field goals and toss footballs under the guidance of a dozen Steelers players. The athletes also autographed hats and posed for photos. The unforgettable evening was featured nationally on ESPN.



Former Steeler kicker Jeff Reed, Steeler punter Dan Sepulveda, and Greg Warren, Steeler long snapper, offer instructions to Veterans on how to tackle Heinz Field.



Veteran Justin Kister of Erie takes his turn on the field.



Veteran Shaunna Miller, from Clarksburg, posed with former Pittsburgh Steeler and Vietnam Veteran Rocky Bleier.



Mr. Dalpiaz (right) discusses Philadelphia's cardiology program with Dr. Andrew Epstein (left).



Joseph M. Dalpiaz returned to his Pennsylvania roots last fall to take the helm of the booming Philadelphia VA. “I really did not know what to expect walking in the door,” Dalpiaz said. “People are anxious to show me the great job they are doing.”

And the Philadelphia staff is doing a great job—including performing the first coronary angioplasty there on Jan. 5. Veteran patients from throughout the region previously had to have this therapeutic procedure to treat narrowed arteries found in coronary heart disease at a non-VA facility.

“Providing excellent health care is what we do,” Dalpiaz said. “It’s important for Veterans and their families to have confidence in the level of care they receive.”

“Our emphasis is comparing ourselves against the best—or even better, beating the best out there,” he added. “VA is a different organization than the one my father used and the one I joined 25 years ago. The shift to more quality, patient-centered care is a national phenomenon but one which really fits what’s happening in Philadelphia, where an enormous transformation is under way.”

Just a few of those recent transformations are a brand new emergency department, 450-space parking garage and renovated specialty clinics.

Dalpiaz began his VA career as a social worker at the Lebanon VA Medical Center and has served in administrative, clinical and leadership roles at various VA facilities, from Clarksburg, W.Va., to Sioux Falls, S.D. Most recently he served as the director of the VA North Texas Health Care System.

VITAL COLLABORATION

VISN 4 is working with PA state courts to give Vets the care they need



The Pennsylvania Veterans Justice Partnership is a unique collaboration aimed at helping Veterans in trouble with the law get the physical, social, and mental health care they need to turn their lives around and avoid jail time.



Visit www.visn4.va.gov/veterans-justice or call the Pennsylvania State Courts at 215-560-6300.

LEADING THE NATION

VISN 4 is processing compensation and pension exams more quickly than ever

VISN 4 is a national leader in improving the compensation and pension (C&P) process for Veterans. Accurate and timely C&P exams are a critical step in Veterans getting the support and benefits they deserve, and it is often a Veteran's first experience with VA health care. Over the last five years, VISN 4 has ranked second in the Nation for getting these exams done quickly. Even with rapid increases in demand, VISN 4 has continued to beat national goals and achieve an average processing time of only 25 days. In February 2011, VISN 4 set its all-time record for processing speed, averaging only 22 days overall, with four facilities ranking in the top five nationally. VISN 4 is also a leader in quality, with 99.6% of C&P exams meeting national quality guidelines. VISN 4 is pioneering new methods for improving C&P exams—including developing streamlined Disability Benefit Questionnaires that are being used nationally and finding new ways to finish exams in hours, not days, by using VA's unparalleled electronic medical records to make opinion-only exams.

★ VISN 4 Facility	Increase in C&P Exams*	Average Processing Time*
Altoona	126.46%	26.2 days
Butler	69.47%	21.9 days
Clarksburg	69.88%	25.7 days
Coatesville	61.74%	25.4 days
Erie	104.51%	20.0 days
Lebanon	31.03%	26.2 days
Philadelphia	72.43%	29.1 days
Pittsburgh	54.51%	20.1 days
Wilkes-Barre	55.94%	27.2 days
Wilmington	14.71%	21.2 days
VISN 4	56.92%	25.6 days

*2006-2010



A NATIONAL PILOT PROJECT

The Philadelphia VA Medical Center is innovating to improve dialysis treatment

Philadelphia is one of four VA medical centers nationwide piloting an innovative dialysis treatment model. The facility is implementing a 12-chair, stand-alone dialysis treatment center to serve patients with high-quality dialysis treatment closer to their homes. Paying for long-term dialysis treatment in the community is one of VA's fastest growing costs. This pilot project represents a more cost-effective solution that will also improve services to Veterans by providing high-quality, convenient care. Over five years, this project will save Philadelphia more than \$4.3 million.



Project members Eric Imondir, nurse manager, and Siddharth Shah, dialysis director

CONGRATULATIONS!

A VA Pittsburgh doctor recently received a national pharmacy award

Dr. C. Bernie Good, Pittsburgh's chief of general medicine, received the VA Under Secretary for Health's Pharmacy Award for the Advancement of Pharmacy Programs. The award recognized his efforts to advance pharmacy practice, innovation, quality, and safety. Good's collaborative work with pharmacy has led to the expansion and development of patient-centered clinical pharmacy services, increased opportunities for pharmacist-directed research, enhanced medication safety for Veterans and increased staff satisfaction.



VA Pittsburgh chief of general medicine, Bernie Good, with Megan Sartore, pharmacist



TOTAL TEAM

2011 WHEELCHAIR GAMES

Where HEROES become LEGENDS

The 31st National Veterans Wheelchair Games are coming to Pittsburgh Aug. 1-6, 2011. More than 500 Veterans from all over the country will compete in 17 different events, such as swimming, track and field, trapshooting, and rugby.

The whole network is getting involved to make it the best Games ever. Robert Bernard, VISN 4's emergency preparedness coordinator, is working with a contact person at each of the ten medical centers to make sure that information is distributed and every VISN 4 employee has the opportunity to help.

"We are a multifacility network, and this is an opportunity for us to throw our joint support behind an event for Veterans," said Bernard. "We owe it to the athletes."

Even the community-based outpatient clinics and Vet Centers are publicizing the Games and recruiting volunteers. Other facilities are working with their Veterans service organizations and local corporations to raise money.



Visit www.pittsburgh.va.gov/NVWG

Email: 2011NVWG@va.gov

Phone: 412-954-5985

VISN 4 employees raised \$910,880.75 for charity!

★ 2010 ★	Pledges Received	Total Contributions
Altoona	214	\$52,567.08
Butler	311	\$66,305.00
Clarksburg	258	\$47,583.14
Coatesville	360	\$80,065.32
Erie	151	\$35,517.18
Lebanon	473	\$122,064.57
Philadelphia	559	\$147,255.77
Pittsburgh	639	\$248,834.41
Wilkes-Barre	339	\$53,748.00
Wilmington	273	\$56,940.28
VISN 4	3,577	\$910,880.75

COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN

Congratulations and thank you!

VISN 4 employees did it again! For the third year in a row, they raised nearly \$1 million for the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC).

During the campaign last fall, employees submitted pledges and participated in a variety of fundraising events such as bake sales, chili cook-offs, blue-jean Fridays, jail days, fall festivals, and more. The CFC is the only authorized solicitation of employees in the Federal workplace on behalf of charitable organizations, and this campaign continues to be the largest and most successful fundraising model in the world. Thousands of local, national and international charities, all screened and approved by Federal employees to meet strict guidelines, benefit from these fundraisers and pledges.

VISN 4 employees prove again and again their commitment to serving not only Veterans, but their community, too!



AM EFFORT ★★★

NATIONWIDE, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS IS GOING WHEREVER VETERANS ARE TO PROVIDE CARE.

For many Veterans, one of those places is the Internet.



Social media is becoming an effective way to extend health messages to our Veterans and their family members.

As always, VA Healthcare-VISN 4 is on the forefront of the latest tool to reach Veterans, pioneering new methods of fostering conversations.



To read Vantage Point, Dispatches from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, visit www.blogs.va.gov.



Watch some of the videos at www.youtube.com/VeteransHealthAdmin.



Check out www.facebook.com/VeteransHealth and take a second to “like” the VISN 4 facilities below.

- www.facebook.com/VAButlerPA
- www.facebook.com/CoatesvilleVAMC
- www.facebook.com/VAMCErie
- www.facebook.com/PhiladelphiaVAMC
- www.facebook.com/VAPHS
- www.facebook.com/WilmingtonVAMC



Get your VA news via “tweets.”
www.twitter.com/VeteransHealth
www.twitter.com/VAButlerPA
www.twitter.com/VAPittsburgh



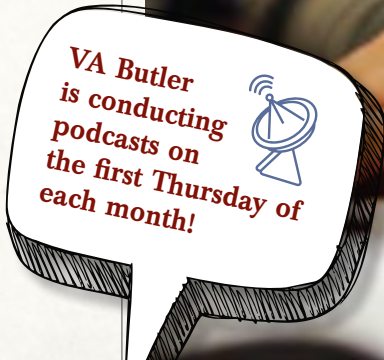
My HealthVet is an online tool that allows Veterans to refill prescriptions, track their health history and more. Just a couple of My HealthVet’s valuable features are secure messaging and Blue Button downloads.

Secure messaging is a Web-based message service that allows VA patients and their health care team to communicate non-urgent information. From anywhere they can get online, Veterans can request appointments, referrals, or prescription renewals. They can even ask general health or administrative questions, or questions specific to their treatment.

By March 31, each VISN 4 facility had begun rolling out secure messaging within their primary care program. VISN staff is working diligently to expand the availability of secure messaging throughout all VISN 4 health care teams.

The Blue Button is a new tool that offers easy access to personal health information. My HealthVet users can view, print, download, or save their personal health information already in My HealthVet and share the information with their health care team, caregivers, or others.

Sign up today at www.myhealth.va.gov, or contact your local My HealthVet coordinator.



VA Butler is conducting podcasts on the first Thursday of each month!





★★★

A PLACE *to* CALL HOME

THE LEBANON VA'S MEDICAL FOSTER HOME
PROGRAM PAIRS VETERANS WITH SOMEONE
TO WATCH OVER THEM

by Arin Gencer

Martin Ginder peered through his binoculars to survey the sunny green landscape in front of him, hoping to spot the deer that sometimes venture into view.

Ginder, 76, stood on a 50-acre hobby farm in Brogue, Pa., a far cry from what he calls “the bat cave,” the dark apartment where he lived alone and would often fall, once cracking a wrist and breaking a hand.

The Marine Veteran’s new home is anything but solitary: His daily companions include caregiver Deb Cartwright, her two teenage sons and several horses and small dogs—in addition to fellow Marine Veteran Rickey Cox.

A PLACE to CALL HOME

The two men are among the first participants in the Lebanon VA Medical Center's Medical Foster Home Program. Launched in March 2009, the program gives Veterans who can no longer properly care for themselves an alternative to assisted living facilities.

Besides Ginder and Cox, three other Veterans live in foster homes, and there are nine approved caregivers, says Teresa Stump-Klinger, who coordinates the program—the first in VISN 4 and one of 69 developing throughout the country.

“We're glad that we can offer this service to Veterans and give them an option besides living in a facility,” Stump-Klinger says.



Lebanon VA Medical Foster Home Program

- First in VISN 4
- Started in 2009
- Five Veterans
- Nine caregiver homes
- \$67-\$100 daily cost to Veterans

The program is based on the idea “that folks will flourish and feel much more at ease and have a better sense of well-being in a home-like situation, versus institutional-style living,” says Ivy Matthews, director of the Lebanon VA's Home-Based Primary Care Program (HBPC), in which medical foster home participants also must be enrolled.

HBPC staff play an instrumental role, supplying the clinical support—doctors, nurses, recreation and occupational therapists and a dietitian, among others—to monitor the Veterans' health and well-being, and giving caregivers hands-on training to meet their charges' unique needs, Matthews says.

Caregivers do not have to be professionals, but they go through a rigorous vetting process, including background checks for anyone in the household older than 18, as well as several different inspections to verify the home is safe and suitably arranged.

“We want to make sure Veterans feel that their needs are being taken care of,” says Stump-Klinger, who pays monthly visits to the homes—all within a one-hour drive from the medical center—and stays in regular contact with caregivers.

Her role also involves a bit of matchmaking: She weighs various factors—geography, home environment, lifestyle preferences, needs and personalities—to determine the best placement for everyone involved.

Ginder, a Korean War Veteran, has found the right fit.

“It's an ideal situation,” says Jeanne Costik, his older sister. “It gives you some peace of mind because Deb is just wonderful with him. And Martin likes the boys, and the boys like him. There's everything here that he enjoys.”

Indeed, says HBPC Nurse Michelle Hartsock, Ginder seems happier these days. “These men aren't used to having all of this help and people taking care of them,” she says.

Vietnam Veteran Rickey Cox, whose room at the Cartwright house is adjacent to Ginder's, has experienced a similar upswing. A diabetic and legally blind, Cox had been living alone and was in the habit of calling out for fast food or Chinese, especially because he couldn't drive.

“I had my concerns about him,” says Hartsock, who worked with Cox and recommended he look into a medical foster home. “He wasn't taking his medicines regularly and definitely wasn't following a diabetic diet.”

Cox, 63, also took to heart his doctor's warnings: “If you don't change your eating habits and lifestyle, it's going to kill you.”

Within six weeks of his April 30 move to Brogue, Cox was consistently taking his medications and eating healthier food under Cartwright's watchful eye. And his blood sugars have dropped to a normal level.

THE BUDDY SYSTEM

Veteran Richard Saller feels right at home with his caregiver

For Army Veteran Richard Saller, a good day starts with a walk to a nearby shopping center and a cup of coffee at a local bagel shop.

Following behind him on these morning jaunts—at a safe distance—is his caregiver, Ousmane Conde. Saller, 59, moved into Conde's Shillington, Pa., home in September 2010. He had been living in a community residential center in Salem, Va., and came to Pennsylvania to be closer to his sister, who lives in York.

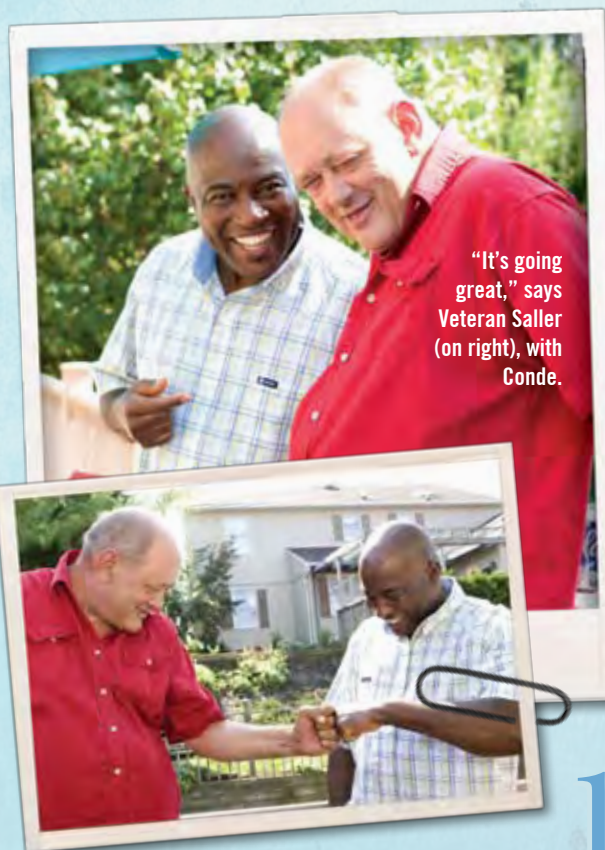
"It's beautiful," says Saller, a Vietnam Veteran, of his new digs in the split-level home, which is located on a quiet neighborhood street. "I am very happy....I like my room, I like my bed—I like everything about it."

Conde has worked to make the Veteran feel welcome. He converted his living room into a first-floor bedroom—a program requirement—and diligently manages Saller's medications.

"I like to help others," Conde says, grinning. "He's a very sweet guy, and he's my buddy."

Saller smiles. "Yeah, you are my buddy."

They bump fists, making their friendship official.



"It's going great," says Veteran Saller (on right), with Conde.

★ SPRING 2011

"I couldn't live by myself anymore—I couldn't take care of myself," says Veteran Ginder, playing cards with Cox, Cartwright's son Sam and family friend Ashley Krebs, with Cartwright in the background.



“

It warms your heart when you see a Veteran who was living alone now living with a family. ”

— Program Coordinator Teresa Stump-Klinger



"It's much nicer to live in somebody's home than in a facility," says HBPC Nurse Hartsock, during a routine checkup with Veteran Ginder.

A PLACE *to* CALL HOME

For Cartwright, the role of caregiver is rewarding—even when she gets the occasional stink eye for limiting the Veterans' cookie consumption.

“Doing this gives you a feeling of giving back to these guys who have given so much over the years to the country,” says Cartwright, whose sons, Paul and Sam, also pitch in. “It’s been a really good experience for all of us....It’s made my boys, who are already good boys, even better kids. They’re more understanding and giving.”

The feeling is mutual, Ginder says. He is glad to have left the bat cave and to be in a place where animals abound—as well as friendship.

“It’s a wonderful program,” he says, while munching on oatmeal and cheesecake cookies—all sugar-free. “The boys help me out a lot. The food’s good—Deb’s a wonderful cook....Everything here is good.”★



“I like the concept,” says Veteran Cox—on right with Krebs, Sam Cartwright and Ginder—of the program.

This is a wonderful place.”

— Jeanne Costik, Veteran Ginder’s sister

THE STORY BEHIND THE MOVEMENT

Congress funded the medical foster home initiative in 2008, but the concept dates back to the 1980s, when a VA social worker from Arkansas would find individuals in the community to take in elderly Veterans with disabilities or chronic illnesses who didn’t want to go into nursing homes.

Thomas McClure, the HBPC social worker with Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System in Little Rock, Ark., later piloted a successful project that would give rise to the Medical Foster Home Program. There are now 69 VAs in 37 states that are developing such programs.

Today’s program targets Veterans of all eras and ages. The foster homes are “a much more appealing alternative to young Veterans who are returning home with conditions such as traumatic brain injury or a spinal cord injury,” says Stump-Klinger, the Lebanon VA’s coordinator. “To offer a 27-year-old Veteran a home atmosphere is much more therapeutic and more appealing than nursing home placement.”



Medical foster homes are spreading beyond the Lebanon VA: Two new programs are in the works at the Coatesville and Philadelphia VA medical centers, where coordinators have been hired in the past year. The Coatesville program placed its first Veteran in early March.



LEARN MORE ABOUT MEDICAL FOSTER HOME PROGRAMS

Lebanon VA

717-272-6621, ext. 5739

www.lebanon.va.gov/Medical_Foster_Home.asp

Coatesville VA

610-466-2273

www.coatesville.va.gov/Medical_Foster_Home_Program.asp

Philadelphia VA

215-823-5800, ext. 4397 or ext. 6591





VISN 4 TELEHEALTH

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMS MEDICAL CARE



From his office at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, Dr. Charles W. Atwood Jr., director of the sleep lab, conducts a follow-up consultation with Veteran Frank Sontag and Paula Bauda, a nurse at Erie, from more than 100 miles away.

VISN 4's telehealth program uses the latest equipment to bring quality health care closer to home—sometimes as close as the living room

From the comfort of the Erie VA Medical Center close to home, Vietnam Veteran Frank Sontag discusses his sleep issues with Dr. Charles W. Atwood Jr.

Atwood observes the 63-year-old Navy Veteran's general appearance and demeanor—helpful in managing sleep apnea cases—as he asks Sontag about his progress in getting healthy, restful sleep and properly using a machine to keep his airway open while he sleeps.

However, Atwood is not in Erie. He is in his office at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, where he directs the sleep lab.

The consultation is part of the telehealth program, allowing real-time medical consultation at a time and place convenient to the Veteran. It's quick, easy and, above all, convenient for Sontag, who is spared a long ride down I-79 to Pittsburgh.

“It saves me time and money in transportation,” said Sontag. “All the hospitals should have this kind of setup—there's no reason to travel anywhere to see a specialist unless you have to. It's the easiest thing to set up, and it's the fastest.”

Around 10 years ago, Atwood became aware that Veterans from the Erie area would spend an entire day travelling for a 15-minute follow-up.

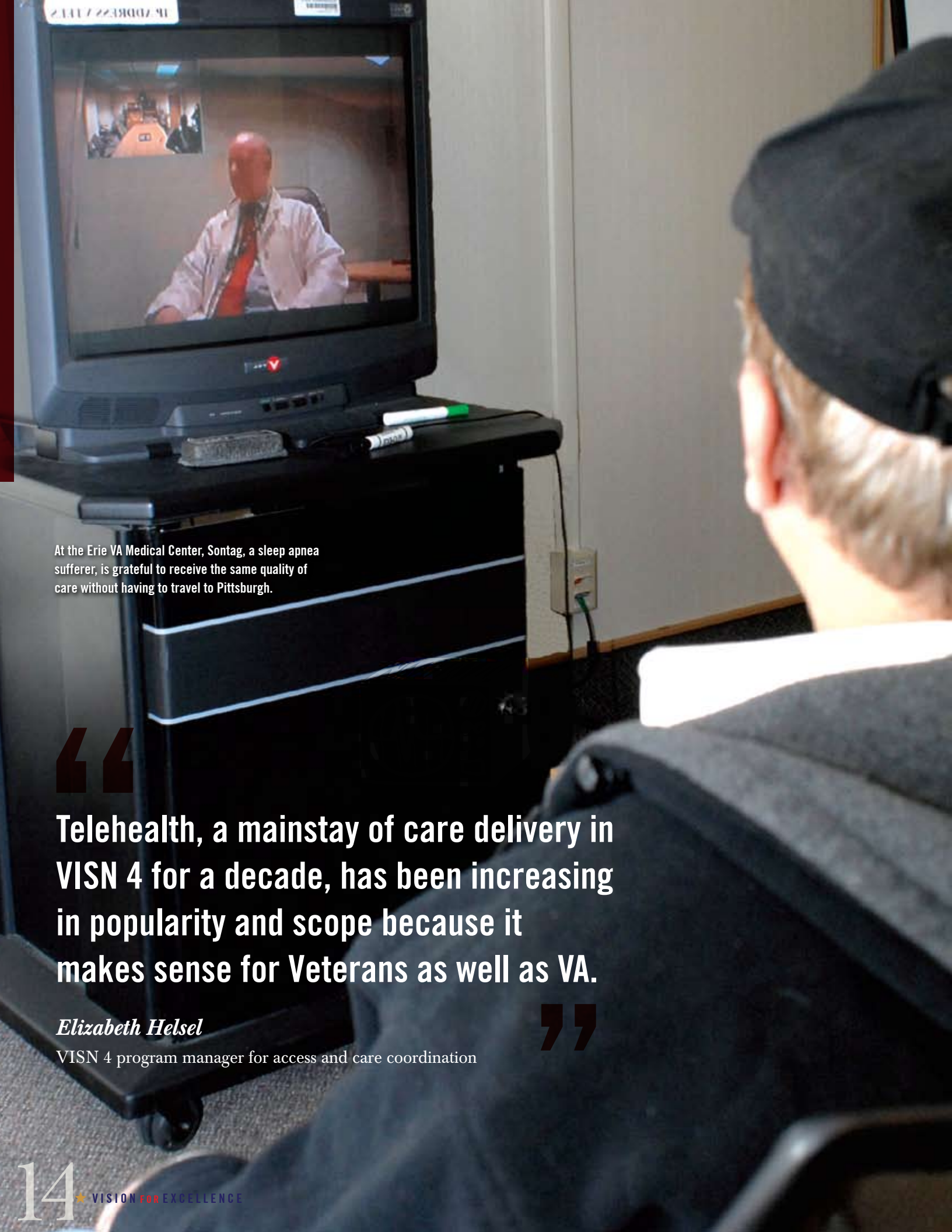
With the assistance of Paula Bauda, a nurse at the Erie VA Medical Center, Atwood acquired the necessary technology and started consulting patients in Erie once a month while sitting at his desk in Pittsburgh. Now he treats about 100 Erie Veterans each year via videoconference.

The results were immediate and dramatic.

“The patients instantly loved it,” said Atwood. “I've received more compliments about the telesleep clinic than anything else I've done here.”

Atwood has collaborated with the Erie and Butler VA medical centers to perform sleep studies in the Veteran's home and have the results sent electronically to Pittsburgh, sparing a trip for the diagnostic test that most sleep disorder patients need. VISN 4 will be expanding this capability soon.





At the Erie VA Medical Center, Sontag, a sleep apnea sufferer, is grateful to receive the same quality of care without having to travel to Pittsburgh.

“

Telehealth, a mainstay of care delivery in VISN 4 for a decade, has been increasing in popularity and scope because it makes sense for Veterans as well as VA.

Elizabeth Helsel

VISN 4 program manager for access and care coordination

”

Another advantage to the program, Bauda said, is the safety factor.

“To put someone with a diagnosis of sleep apnea in a car for a two-and-a-half hour ride to Pittsburgh and back might be a hazard if they have not gotten enough sleep the night before,” Bauda said. “And not only are you saving Veterans five hours out of their day, you’re also saving them money.”

Another new telehealth program attracting Veterans is telesurgery—using videoconference for pre- and post-surgical consultations. According to Dr. Ghazali A. Chaudry, chief of surgical service at Wilkes-Barre, clinical video telehealth is just the beginning in outreach efforts for surgical services and he hopes to expand to other community-based outpatient clinics in the near future.

John Snyder, a 1970s era Veteran, was the first person to use the Wilkes-Barre VA’s telesurgery program.

Snyder, who lives in Allentown, Pa., had a gall bladder attack on Veterans Day 2010. The Wilkes-Barre VA arranged a telesurgery consult for the 53-year-old. Snyder, new to VA, was very impressed with the process.

“I went to my local clinic in Allentown,” Snyder said. “There were two nurses in the room with me and in Wilkes-Barre there were four surgeons, including the chief of surgery, on the other side of the computer. It saved me a lot of time—an hour’s trip.”

Following the videoconference consultation, the surgeons in Wilkes-Barre scheduled Snyder for laparoscopic surgery.

The bottom line for Atwood and other VA physicians is that the program has maintained the quality of service without requiring long drives for patients.

“It’s been a very enjoyable program to develop because Veterans appreciate that they get the same quality of care without having to travel to Pittsburgh,” said Atwood.



Interested Veterans should speak with their primary care provider to see if there are any Telehealth programs in their area that they might benefit from.

VISN 4 TELEHEALTH USERS

TYPES	FY 08	FY 09	FY 10
CCHT	1,743	1,999	2,746
STORE & FORWARD	564	2,234	3,552
CVT	1,997	3,980	6,048

Care Coordination Home Telehealth (CCHT)

Targets:

- diabetes and heart disease
- lung problems
- depression
- post-traumatic stress disorder
- weight reduction

Tools: Health monitoring devices placed in the Veteran’s home transmit information for nurses to use to monitor, educate, and intervene, as necessary.

2,746

Veterans used VISN 4’s CCHT program in fiscal year 2010.

Store and Forward Telehealth

Targets:

- diabetic retinal screening
- cardiology
- dermatology
- wound care

Tools: Digital images, video, audio and clinical data are captured by community-based outpatient clinics or other VA medical centers and transmitted securely to relevant specialists for review.

3,552

Veterans benefitted from VISN 4’s Store and Forward program in fiscal year 2010.

Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT)

Targets:

- mental health counseling
- medication management
- post-traumatic stress disorder
- substance abuse treatment
- nutrition/diet
- speech pathology
- spinal cord injury
- general internal medicine
- dermatology
- pulmonary/chest
- anti-coagulation
- surgical consultation

Tools: Real-time consultations between the Veteran and one or more doctors via videoconferencing.

6,048

Veterans used VISN 4’s CVT program in fiscal year 2010.

Just a few of
**VISN 4's
CONSTRUCTION
HIGHLIGHTS**



**COMING
THIS FALL:**
Special all-
construction issue of
Vision for Excellence!

ALTOONA finished a top-to-bottom renovation of the canteen. The new space is more efficient, larger, more comfortable, and includes the full array of new kitchen equipment.

CLARKSBURG'S newly renovated nuclear medicine suite includes new high-tech digital imaging cameras, and offers more patient privacy.

COATESVILLE used \$2.3 million in stimulus funding to modernize and expand its pharmacy. The success of this project was featured on CNN Money and in the VA's VAnguard magazine.

ERIE just completed the expansion and renovation of their specialty care clinics, which streamlined services and added 8,623 square feet of new space. This project allows the facility to now see 90.7 percent of specialty care patients within 14 days—exceeding the national “exceptional” target.

LEBANON recently completed a 14,000-square-foot rehabilitation building that consolidated physical therapy, kinesiotherapy, and occupational therapy services into one modern area. Almost 60,000 cubic feet of grout had to be pumped underneath the structure to create a stable foundation.

PITTSBURGH recently renovated 9,000 square feet of existing clinical space to provide 14 new intensive care beds. The open design, centralized nursing station, and sliding glass doors on patient rooms provide a safe, efficient, and comfortable space.

VISION

for Excellence

SPRING 2011

VISN 4

MICHAEL E. MORELAND, FACHE
NETWORK DIRECTOR

CARLA SIVEK, MSW
DEPUTY NETWORK DIRECTOR

DAVID S. MACPHERSON, MD, MPH
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

JAMES BAKER
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

DOT STEELE
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

DAVID E. COWGILL
PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS MANAGER

BARBARA FORSHA, MSN, RN, ET
QUALITY MANAGEMENT OFFICER

VISION FOR EXCELLENCE

MANAGING EDITOR
DAVID E. COWGILL

ASSISTANT EDITOR
SHELLEY K. NULPH

CONTRIBUTORS
PAUL SHETLER FAST
ARIN GENCER
KEITH GOTTSCHALK

PHOTOGRAPHERS
JOHN BOWSER
DAVID JONES
CONNIE FULLENLOVE
WILLIAM GEORGE
SARAH GUDGEON
SCOTT GUIDO
GLENN HANGARD

VA Healthcare-VISN 4
323 North Shore Drive, Suite 400
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

PHONE: 412-822-3316
FAX: 412-822-3275
www.visn4.va.gov

WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU

VISN 4's Vision for Excellence is published for the employees, volunteers, patients and friends of VA Healthcare-VISN 4. To submit story ideas for possible inclusion, contact David Cowgill at 412-822-3578 or david.cowgill@va.gov.

Issue 9