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NEW PROGRAM HELPS VETERANS COMMUNICATE FOLLOWING STROKE
Veterans with Aphasia can now apply for intensive rehabilitation program.

PITTSBURGH – June 25, 2010 – VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) is accepting applications from Veterans for a unique, intensive 23-day residential aphasia treatment program.

Aphasia is a disorder resulting from brain damage (such as stroke) that causes communication impairments ranging from mild word-finding difficulty to complete inability to speak, understand, read, or write. Between 11,000 and 13,000 Veterans are admitted to VA hospitals each year for stroke, with 20-35% of these individuals expected to have aphasia.

The VAPHS Program for Intensive Residential Aphasia Treatment & Education (PIRATE) includes individual therapy sessions, supplemented with group treatment, and computer-based learning activities. Veterans receive up to 6 hours of speech and language therapy each day that is individually tailored to their needs. Family members have the opportunity to participate in educational and counseling aspects of the program to enhance therapeutic gains and maximize functional outcomes.

Sessions are offered quarterly, with housing and meals provided in home-like residential villas located at the H. John Heinz, III VA Progressive Care Center near Aspinwall. Upcoming programs are scheduled to begin on August 2 and October 18.

"For us, the PIRATE program is much more than speech therapy," stated the father of a previous participant. "So far you and the others have performed a minor miracle in Dan's personal life. We hope to continue the gains."

"I am very grateful for your time and patience in helping me to understand aphasia," said the wife of another PIRATE participant.

Veterans may apply to participate in the PIRATE program by contacting Brooke Swoyer at 412-954-4773 or Jim Schumacher at 412-360-1265. The application materials are also available at www.pittsburgh.va.gov/PIRATE.

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