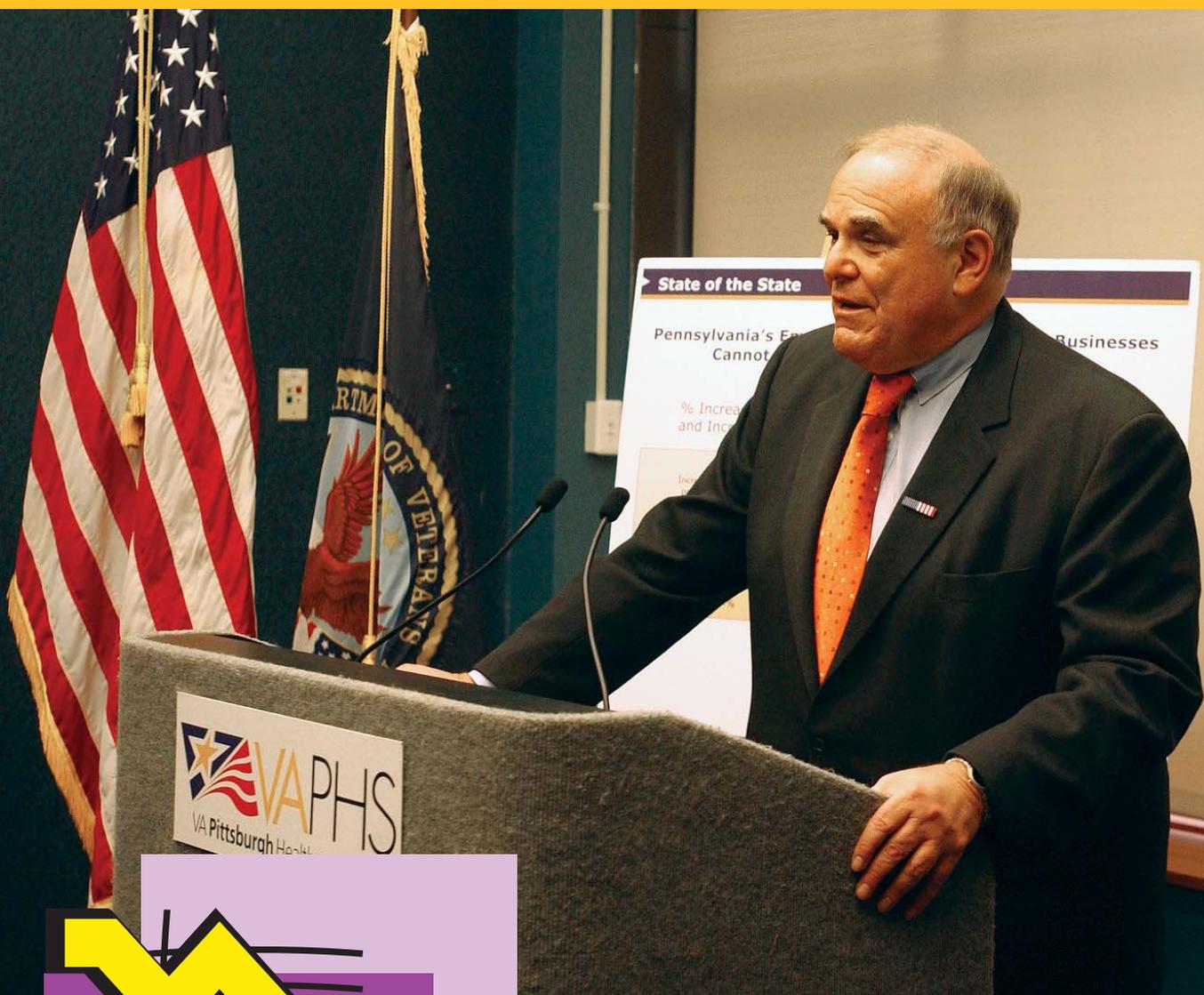


Working Together

Issue 25
Winter 2007



Getting to Zero!



MRSA Prevention Initiative

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A Message from the Acting **Director**



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Check out our Web site at:
www.va.gov/pittsburgh

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Mona F. Melhem, MD
Acting Chief of Staff

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Associate Director

Ira Richmond
Associate Director for
Patient Care Services

Robert Callahan
Associate Director for
Site Management

**The VA Pittsburgh
Working Together**
(1999-2007)

is published for the employees,
volunteers, patients and friends of
the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System.
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On the Cover:

Top: Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell
conducts a press conference at VAPHS, asking
the state to emulate VAPHS's success in
reducing hospital-acquired infections.
Bottom: Dr. Rajiv Jain, VAPHS Acting Director,
leads the Governor, Rosemarie Greco,
Director of the PA Office of Health Care Reform,
and members of the media on a tour of 4-West.
WARREN PARK PHOTOS

Dear Fellow Employees, Volunteers, Veterans and Friends of the VAPHS,

It is an honor and privilege to have the opportunity to serve as the Acting Director of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. The Executive Leadership Team remains committed to providing our veterans with the best possible health care that can be found in the nation.

Our Strategic Goals for the remainder of this fiscal year are focused in the following ten areas with the underlying objective of achieving clinical excellence in all programs and services:

- Lead the national MRSA prevention program
- Excel on national performance measures, implementing innovative strategies for breakthrough performance
- Continue progress on \$200 million major construction project while assuring continuity of services
- Enhance acute inpatient capacity and expand ICU and tele beds for market use, including enhancements to physician coverage
- Improve processes to manage patients with stroke, transplant evaluation, breast cancer, and cervical cancer
- Improve behavioral health continuum across the western market and expansion of recovery model into inpatient psychiatry
- Provide timely and coordinated care to Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom returnees, assuring access to state-of-the-art equipment and prosthetics
- Consider outpatient care management for frequent emergency department visitors
- Assure a safe and stimulating nursing home environment through the Eden model
- Establish specialty follow up care at Butler VAMC



Dr. Rajiv Jain (shown introducing and welcoming Governor Rendell) has been chosen to co-chair a national MRSA Prevention Implementation Task Force.

This first issue of "Working Together" for 2007 will present a feature on our highly successful, award-winning 2006 Combined Federal Campaign, Governor Rendell's visit to VAPHS to acknowledge our successful MRSA initiative, VA Secretary Nicholson's visit to VAPHS and highlights of various projects and initiatives which will assist our healthcare system in continuing to provide the best possible care to our patients. It also spotlights the many outstanding accomplishments of our dedicated staff.

Sincerely,

Rajiv Jain, MD

Acting Director, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System



Vital Signs

Visit from Secretary Nicholson

The Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of the VA, visited the University Drive Division of VAPHS on Wednesday, December 20. The Secretary's visit included a briefing on the VAPHS MRSA initiative, independent transplant program, and major construction project. The Secretary also took a tour of University Drive, including recently renovated operating room suites, new Eye Clinic, and consolidated business service center. [VAPHS](#)



GLENN HANGARD PHOTO

Dr. Mark Wilson, VAPHS Chief of Surgery, shows Secretary Nicholson a newly renovated operating room.



GLENN HANGARD PHOTO

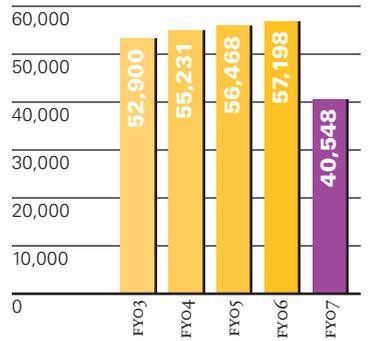
Dr. Bernie Good, VAPHS primary care physician, gives Secretary Nicholson a tour of the recently completed Phase I of the new Emergency Department.



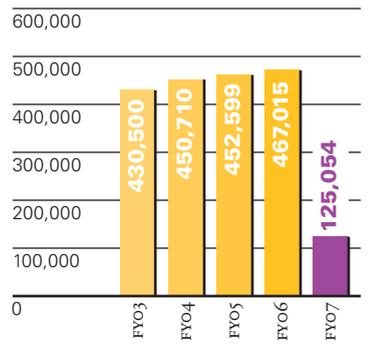
GLENN HANGARD PHOTO

Robert Callahan, VAPHS Associate Director for Site Management; Secretary Nicholson, and Michael Moreland, VISN 4 Network Director, tour the parking garage construction site.

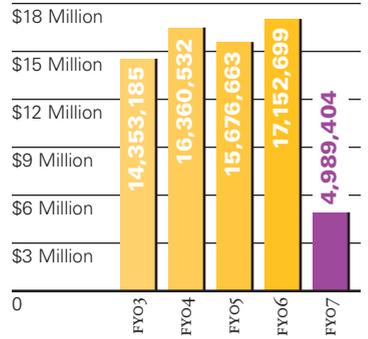
UNIQUE PATIENTS



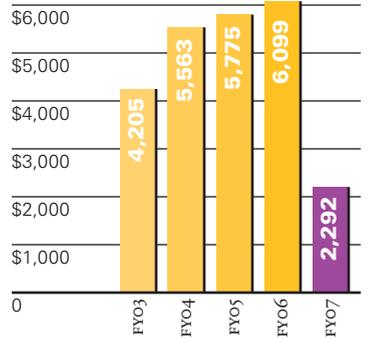
OUTPATIENT VISITS



MEDICAL CARE COST RECOVERY



OBLIGATIONS/UNIQUE PATIENT



FY07 as of 12/31/2006

2006 VAPHS Combined Federal Campaign

The 2006 Regional Hero, who was nominated for the prestigious National CFC Hero award, was David Cowgill, VAPHS CFC Chairperson. The winner will be announced in mid-March. Heroes are identified as individuals who went above and beyond dedicating their time to the CFC.

\$178,282.94
Contributions
collected
(145.3% increase
from 2005)

1,155
pledges were
received
(332.6% increase
from 2005)

“The most successful campaign in the history of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System.”

2006 Eagle Club Members

Carolyn Bechtold
Glen Buzzelli
Patricia Caldwell
Robert Callahan
Karen Campano
Timothy Carlos
David Cowgill
Roland Criswell
Kathleen Dahl
Frederick DeRubertis
Patricia Eagon
David Eibling
Barry Fisher
Patricia Hayes
Mary Ann Hibbs
Bonita Hubicz
William Hula
Rajiv Jain
James Johnson
Steve Krumholz
Scott Kulich
Kent Kwoh
David Macpherson
Susan McCaffrey
Michael Moreland
Robert Muder
Patricia Nealon
Joni Parise
Terri Pennybaker
Jo Petro
Ron Rabold
Ira Richmond
Paul Rogers
Judith Siddle
Carla Sivek
Ali Sonel
Rebecca Studer
Melissa Sundin
Danette Tihey
Richard Tihey
David Tomayko
Lola Wells
Mark Wilson

2006 CFC Excellence Award

VAPHS was named as the sector, or federal agency, that best maintained/increased participation and overall campaign performance.

Contribution Levels	CONTRIBUTION OF \$260-\$519	CONTRIBUTION OF \$520-\$779	CONTRIBUTION OF \$780 OR MORE
Year	Silver Awards	Gold Awards	Eagle Club
2006	147	48	44
2005	62	21	21

38%
of VAPHS
employees
contributed
(only 8.8%
in 2005)

13 out
of 23 sections
exceeded
a 50%
participation
rate

**44 Eagle
Club Members**
(contribution of \$780 or more)
in 2006
(109.5% increase over 2005)

More money was collected in 2006
than in 2005 and 2004 combined.

Contribution and Participation Statistics	2006 PARTICIPATION %	2006 INCREASE IN PARTICIPATION %	2006 CONTRIBUTIONS \$	2005 CONTRIBUTIONS \$	2006 INCREASE IN CONTRIBUTIONS %	2006 INCREASE IN CONTRIBUTIONS \$
Patient Care Services	33.45%	539.64%	\$22,876.00	\$6,469.00	253.62%	\$16,407.00
Clinical Support	19.84%	114.69%	\$16,115.00	\$8,990.00	79.25%	\$7,125.00
Surgical Specialty	72.27%	588.29%	\$14,884.00	\$6,982.00	113.18%	\$7,902.00
Office of the Director	100.00%	269.00%	\$13,386.00	\$7,514.00	78.15%	\$5,872.00
Facilities Management	35.26%	220.55%	\$13,641.20	\$4,524.00	201.53%	\$9,117.20
Medical Specialty	30.67%	208.60%	\$12,515.92	\$4,877.00	156.63%	\$7,638.92
Research	53.42%	1,172.02%	\$9,259.03	\$1,101.00	740.96%	\$8,158.02
Primary Care	20.75%	200.79%	\$8,974.00	\$4,934.00	81.88%	\$4,040.00
AD for Site Management	51.72%	875.93%	\$7,925.00	\$3,510.00	125.78%	\$4,415.00
Behavioral Health	57.61%	487.84%	\$7,342.00	\$2,784.00	163.72%	\$4,558.00
Community Based Care	62.50%	681.25%	\$6,956.00	\$1,364.00	409.97%	\$5,592.00
VISN 4	68.75%	106.46%	\$6,864.80	\$3,578.00	91.84%	\$3,286.80
Critical Care	10.88%	101.46%	\$6,788.00	\$2,497.00	171.85%	\$4,291.00
Business Service	19.29%	188.79%	\$6,518.00	\$3,028.00	115.26%	\$3,490.00
Human Resources	55.88%	533.59%	\$4,930.00	\$884.00	457.69%	\$4,046.00
Chief of Staff	100.00%	142.84%	\$4,544.00	\$2,028.00	124.06%	\$2,516.00
IRM	43.59%	88.70%	\$3,247.00	\$4,186.00	-22.43%	-\$939.00
Geriatrics and Extended Care	43.18%	217.51%	\$3,113.00	\$1,323.00	135.30%	\$1,790.00
Associate Director	100.00%	N/A	\$3,087.00	\$0.00	N/A	\$3,087.00
GRECC	46.15%	99.97%	\$2,522.00	\$1,092.00	130.95%	\$1,430.00
Canteen	53.49%	2,225.58%	\$1,311.00	\$650.00	101.69%	\$661.00
Education	63.64%	249.65%	\$1,068.00	\$360.00	196.67%	\$708.00
MIRECC	88.89%	N/A	\$416.00	\$0.00	N/A	\$416.00

3 sections achieved a
100% participation rate

Joseph Hanney

Ph.D.

DR. JOSEPH HANNEY RECENTLY CAME TO THE VA PITTSBURGH HEALTHCARE SYSTEM AS THE NEW ASSOCIATE CHIEF OF STAFF FOR EDUCATION. He oversees the coordination of mandatory training required by VA to keep everyone on



WARREN PARK PHOTO

the same page with regard to standards of care. In addition, he supports technical training for the specialized skills of individual departments. The Education section assists individual service lines in offering in-services, and many of these are such great content (such as the Friday GRECC in-services) that Dr. Hanney is looking at how VAPHS can publicize them to other employees and get them professionally accredited. Education is also responsible for managing VAPHS affiliations with academic institutions. Dr. Hanney also oversees the management locally of the national tuition reimbursement programs from the Healthcare Retention and Recruitment Office, the NNEI, EISP, EDRP, VANEPP and other programs that pay for expenses related to training difficult-to-recruit specialties, particularly Nursing. Dr. Hanney believes that the Education section is here to change what all VAPHS staff does, for the better, as painlessly as possible.

Dr. Hanney began working at VAPHS in October and has found that the people here have been great and very helpful. He loves the city of Pittsburgh.

Dr. Hanney started as a psychologist with the VA 17 years ago in Behavioral Medicine and Pain Management. He later ran programs for the Acute Inpatient Psychiatric Unit, which was a comfortable fit, as he had been a nursing assistant for ten years prior to earning a degree. He has also run CWT, IT, Supported Employment, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs. He has also been a facility education officer and joined the Employee Education System in 1998. As an education service representative, Dr. Hanney helped VISN 11 with its training programs, talent-spotted for superior programs and presenters in order to get them national exposure, and got a chance to pilot the satellite/desktop network we now know as the Content Distribution Network.

Dr. Hanney earned his Ph.D. in Psychology doing clinical practice in Chicago and concurrent research on computerized

Judith Buccini



JUDITH BUCCINI WAS RECENTLY APPOINTED AS THE NEW INFORMATION SECURITY OFFICER (ISO) FOR THE VA PITTSBURGH HEALTHCARE SYSTEM. She is responsible for oversight of the information security program for



WARREN PARK PHOTO

VAPHS. Her mission is to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of VA data by ensuring that appropriate security controls and processes are in place and followed by everyone. Protecting patient and employee information is everyone's job. As the information security officer, she also teaches people the importance of protecting personal information. She began working at VAPHS on December 26, 2006.

Prior to coming here, Ms. Buccini worked for the US Army Corps of Engineers for 16 years. She started as a computer specialist doing programming and user support but spent most of her time there as a network administrator. Judy moved to the U.S. Army Reserve 99th Regional Readiness Command in 2004 where she was their network supervisor. She has held information security roles in both of these previous positions.

Ms. Buccini attended Carlow College where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in computer science and accounting. **VAPHS**

psychological testing. He is a graduate of VISN 1's LEAD program; the program was one of the first of its kind and contained the entire Physicians in Management I, II, and III courses offered via speakers and Internet from the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota.

An internship with VA let him see that the staff who work at VA have a dedication to their patients that he'd never seen working in private and state hospitals, and community clinics. They're never satisfied with their results, but are always looking for a way to tweak the system and produce better outcomes. It is this that makes the VA a model health care organization.

VAPHS

Mailbox

Dear Mr. Moreland,

Thank you very much for your letter of condolences upon the death of my brother, PS.

A portion of the last line in your letter was especially meaningful to us and deserves recognition... "that you may draw some measure of comfort knowing that others care and share in your loss." These words rang particularly true in our experience with the John Heinz Progressive Center, Palliative Care Unit, in Aspinwall. I have sung the praises for this Center and its staff in my July 15, 2004 letter to you, but they pale in comparison to our most recent experience, my brother's final day.

When it became apparent that my brother's life was coming to an end, Dr. Emily Jaffe wore many hats, each with great professionalism & humanity; she was foremost the doctor but remained the friend. In those rare moments when she was not physically present, Dr. Jaffe's Physician Assistant, Jacqueline Ruple, filled any gaps that may have been. Visibly saddened herself at the moment of my brother's death, she was a pillar of strength and support to us. Their sensitivity to our needs at such a difficult time is so deeply appreciated. Sue Pataky, the Unit's Social Worker, has been an ongoing and invaluable support to us. Over the last couple of years she has overextended herself both professionally and personally, which we will continue to appreciate. Sue has been a comforting arm around the shoulder. We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge Mary Reith, the Unit Secretary... never a question or a "yell for help" from us did she leave unattended, even after my brother's death.

But, Mr. Moreland, it doesn't end there. We had very little time to get to the Center. When we arrived, not knowing that my brother only had moments left, the entire 3B Unit was there for us. Not only the nurses who have given so much care to P, but ALL the extended Care Givers attended to every need P or we had. The room was filled with a "family" atmosphere, which is especially important to us since my brother always expressed his wish to die at "home" (the Heinz Center) surrounded by his "extended family." We know that, especially in the Palliative Care Unit, death is part of the job, but please know this, all the folks in that room at the passing of my brother were genuinely affected by his death. Fr. Bob led us in prayer, staff members shared special moments they remembered about P and tears were not in short supply.

Now you can understand why part of the last line in your letter was so meaningful. Yes, it IS a great comfort to us that even though P died in a hospital setting, your staff personalized that sad moment for us and it is a source of great comfort to us knowing that P died with dignity in a caring and loving environment.

On behalf of my brother, please accept our heartfelt thanks for all the kindness the staff of Unit 3B showered not only on my brother but also on us. They have been caring, professional and patient even in difficult moments... for this we feel they deserve special recognition. Please feel free to share our compliments and appreciation with them.

Sincerely,
—E.M.

EMPLOYEES WITH

20 years

OR more OF SERVICE!

The employees listed have reached a benchmark in their years of government service during the period October 1, 2006 through February 1, 2007.

40 years

Linda Stotts
Critical Care Service Line

Virginia Welker
Patient Care Services

35 years

Sharon Moore
Behavioral Health Service Line

30 years

Louis Biancaniello
Primary Care Service Line

John Price, III
Facilities Management Service Line

Anna Boehm
Community Based Care Service Line

Darla Reid-Blackwell
Patient Care Services

John Erskine
Community Based Care Service Line

Nicholas L. Squeglia
Research

25 years

Roland Criswell
Nutrition & Food Service

Cherie Fitzpatrick
Medical Specialty Service Line

Karen Delorme
Behavioral Health Service Line

Luciana Teodoro
Nutrition & Food Service

20 years

Marianne Allen
Business Service Line

Judy Ann Marco
Surgical Specialty Service Line

Richard Black
Facilities Management Service Line

Gene Martin
Patient Care Services

Antoine Boyd
Facilities Management Service Line

Karen L. Mazza
Patient Care Services

Linda Cigich
Community Based Care Service Line

Melinda O'Donnell
Surgical Specialty Service Line

Sharon Conlin
Surgical Specialty Service Line

Paul Palevsky
Medical Specialty Service Line

David Cowgill
Office of the Director

Linda C. Parker
Business Service Line

Kathleen Gregory
Veterans Canteen Service

Dennis C. Plummer
Surgical Specialty Service Line

Gail Guzman
Business Service Line

Marianne Pohl
Primary Care Service Line

Clifford James
Facilities Management Service Line

Christopher Sparacino
Community Based Care Service Line

CONGRATULATIONS!



▼ MRSA "Getting to Zero" Initiative

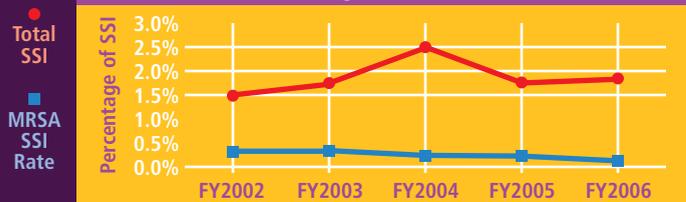
An initiative to eradicate MRSA infections and enhance patient safety was recently introduced nationally. Sharing research and successful initiatives with VA hospitals across the country, the initiative focuses on the implementation of active MRSA surveillance and appropriate contact isolation precautions. VAPHS is a regional leader and national model in infection control.

Despite Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) rates already below the national average, VAPHS began a MRSA Prevention Initiative in FY02. The initiative began with a pilot on two units: a surgical unit in acute care and the surgical intensive care unit. In FY05 facility-wide programs began to include all of acute care and Heinz Division. VAPHS started with 18-20 infections a year in 2002. Currently the average is one to two infections per year. VA Pittsburgh is one of only two or three hospitals in the country doing hospital-wide surveillance cultures on all admissions, transfers and discharges.

Based upon the tremendous success of the program, VAPHS has been chosen as a leader and model for the National MRSA Initiative: Getting to Zero! Currently 17 VA hospitals around the country are piloting the MRSA bundle developed at VAPHS to see if they can replicate the success achieved at VAPHS.



VA Pittsburgh SSI and MRSA SSI Rates



Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell visited the University Drive Division of the VAPHS on Wednesday, January 24. The Governor had personally requested to visit the VAPHS to observe the MRSA accomplishments that he has been hearing about. Governor Rendell conducted a 30-minute, formal press conference to explain that a portion of his new health care reform act (Prescription for Pennsylvania) aims to eliminate hospital-acquired infections and was written to emulate the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System's plan and success with their MRSA initiative.

At the conclusion of the press conference, the Governor took a tour of Unit 4-West, which is a medical-surgical unit. Several staff members presented the tour and gave presentations on various aspects of the MRSA initiative. **VAPHS**



Acting Nurse Manager Darlene Dietrich and Nursing Assistant John Ringdal discuss hand hygiene with the Governor during his tour.



Nursing Assistant John Ringdal shows Governor Rendell the newly designed supply room that has helped improve efficiency and productivity.



Governor Rendell explains to the media just how costly hospital-acquired infections can be - last year in Pennsylvania they led to nearly 2,500 deaths and more than \$3.5 billion in hospital charges.



Governor Rendell toured Unit 4-West (medical-surgical unit). Staff members presented on various aspects of protocols developed to combat hospital-acquired infections.



Governor Rendell, VAPHS Chief of Surgery Dr. Mark Wilson, and Nursing Assistant John Ringdal listen to Dr. Rajiv Jain, Acting Director, explain the MRSA initiative while reporters observe.

