

2015 ANNUAL REPORT



VA PITTSBURGH HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Front Cover: Alissa Kmatz, a VA Pittsburgh nurse and Cameos of Caring winner, prepares a room before a patient arrives.

FACILITY OVERVIEW

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System serves the Veteran population throughout the tri-state area of Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia and is comprised of two clinical care campuses in Pittsburgh, as well as five community-based outpatient clinics.

Our University Drive acute care facility has **146 operating beds** distributed among medicine, surgery, neurology and critical care. A range of outpatient services and **78 secure, private psychiatric beds** are also located at this campus.

Our H.J. Heinz campus is home to a **262-bed Community Living Center** as well as an ambulatory care center that offers outpatient services including dental, primary care, pharmacy and rehabilitation. The campus also offers a **65-bed Veterans Recovery Center and 31 rehabilitation treatment beds**.

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2015 Strategic Plan

Four main goals:

- ① Improve performance.
- ② Promote a culture of positive service.
- ③ Advance health care innovation for Veterans and the country.
- ④ Increase operational effectiveness and accountability.

Our Mission, Vision and Values

MISSION

To honor America's Veterans with world-class health care, train their future providers and advance medical knowledge through research.

VISION

To partner with Veterans and their families to optimize their health and quality of life through integrated, innovative and compassionate care.

VALUES

I CARE: Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF OF STAFF

ALI F. SONEL, MD, FACC, FACP

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System is a leader in providing high quality health care to our nation's Veterans. Our talented and dedicated employees serve approximately 70,000 Veterans each year in a highly complex and critical health care environment.

In 2015, we initiated a number of programs to better serve Veterans in the region and beyond, including our "Never Say No" promise.

"Never Say No" extends the reach of our expert care teams. Through this promise, we guarantee that eligible Veterans throughout Pennsylvania can receive specialized care such as surgery, oncology, and more at VA Pittsburgh. We ensure a seamless delivery of care through coordinating closely with our sister facilities.

Together, we are one VA. Dedicated to serving you, our nation's Veterans.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity.

SERVING VETERANS WITH PRIDE



SURGICAL CAPACITY

In December 2015, VA Pittsburgh performed **550 surgical procedures, including four liver transplants and 14 kidney transplants**. In our nearly 90-year history, this was the highest volume of procedures—and transplants—conducted in one month.



"NEVER SAY NO"

VA Pittsburgh served **70,462 unique patients** in fiscal year 2015, an increase of more than 1,500 from the prior year. Our "Never Say No" policy will continue to boost that number and improve patient satisfaction throughout the region.



INTEGRATED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Nearly 13,000 Veterans came to us for behavioral health appointments in 2015—a seven percent increase since 2013. Our focus on integrating primary care and behavioral health—along with convenient care options—has helped us better serve more Veterans in recent years.

HANDS-ON BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

Our Peer Support Specialists guide Veterans through the recovery process from personal experience.



Getting Care Where and When You Need It

Drop-In Clinics

Veterans can see a nurse practitioner or psychiatrist for immediate help every weekday at our University Drive campus.

Community-Based Care

Telemental health care (p.8) is available to Veterans at five community-based outpatient clinics, two Vet Centers, a transitional housing and services center, and a regional trade school.

Home-Based Care

Veterans transmit data using in-home monitoring devices to VA nurses who help guide their care.

A group of eight caregivers at VA Pittsburgh are helping Veterans in treatment for mental illness and substance abuse—Veterans who themselves have fought similar challenges.

Peer support specialists help Veterans navigate the VA system, provide information on services, advocate for Veterans in treatment and provide emotional support.

“Peer support really works. It’s effective because of the shared life experiences between Veterans,” said VA Pittsburgh Peer Support Specialist Fred Nardei. “We’ve learned to overcome the same adversities and challenges they’re facing. Our message to those still struggling is one of hope and recovery.”

VA Pittsburgh’s Peer Resource Center is collaborating with its sister education center in New England on research, training and developing the role of peer support specialists for VA centers across the country.

“Helping to shape the future of peer support within the VA and assisting my fellow Veterans is the most rewarding challenge of my life,” said Nardei.



*Veteran
Fred Nardei,
Peer Support
Specialist*

EVENTS AROUND CAMPUS



Bags for Buddies June

Teen volunteer Jack You raised and donated nearly \$3,000 for food and toiletries for Veterans heading home from care.



Independence Day Parade July

Veterans from our Community Living Center celebrated July 4 with a parade around the H.J. Heinz campus.

CARING FOR VETERANS WHO ARE HOMELESS

VA Pittsburgh leads regional community partners in addressing the needs of Veterans combatting homelessness.

Photos Give “Voice” to Homeless Veterans’ Health

Veterans experiencing housing instability gave the public an inside look at their lives in a study examining how Veterans facing homelessness view health care.

In “Homeless Veterans’ Opinions of Integrated Care Environments: A Photo-Narrative Study” Veterans who are homeless or experiencing housing instability were asked to take photographs representing their thoughts on health and wellness as well as how they make decisions about health care.

The nearly 40 photographs and corresponding narratives captured the challenges faced by housing unstable Veterans, from addiction treatment to transportation needs and mental health care.

“There’s a lot of resilience and hope conveyed in those photographs,” said Lauren Broyles, a researcher at the VA Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion. “It is important they tell us their stories so we can help other Veterans in similar circumstances get the care they need.”



Veteran Michael Matthews holds a photo of his apartment



HOUSING ASSISTANCE

210+
Veterans using transitional housing

Nearly **400**
HUD-VASH vouchers distributed

HEALTH CARE

400
Veterans get care through Homeless Patient Aligned Care teams, including:

- **8,200** behavioral health sessions
- **630** primary care appointments



VA Secretary Visit July

John Pinigus received a service coin from VA Secretary Bob McDonald during an employee town hall for his work with Project Healing Waters, a weekly fly fishing program for Veterans.



Pit Boss August

Cast members from the TLC show “Pit Boss” and one of their service dogs stopped by the H.J. Heinz campus to meet with Veterans.

TIMELY ACCESS IS A TOP PRIORITY

VA Pittsburgh is committed to providing Veterans timely access to the care they need, where they need it.

Bed Management Center

On any given day, upward of 400 Veterans may be hospitalized at VA Pittsburgh. Managing bed availability is a huge task when considering the near-constant flow of patient admissions and discharges throughout the day.

VA Pittsburgh is home to one of the most advanced bed tracking programs in the VA system. Our Bed Management Center staff monitors and tracks bed availability, pending patient placements and scheduled and unscheduled admissions. The work of the Bed Management Center team improves hospital efficiency, decreases bed wait times and allows us to ensure that we have beds available for patients needing advanced care who are coming to VA Pittsburgh from other VA facilities.

Our bed management system also allows us to better plan for patient needs and reduce costs. Better bed management at our facilities results in needing fewer beds in community hospitals for care we can provide. Our Bed Management Center is just one of the many ways VA Pittsburgh is leading the VA in efficiency and quality care for our nation's Veterans.

Rapid Access Clinic

Our Rapid Access Clinic has improved Veterans' access to follow-up care, allowing emergency department staff to schedule referral appointments within a few days—even the same day!—in one of 18 connected clinics. Quickly getting Veterans into these appointments reduces poor clinical outcomes, improves patient and provider satisfaction, and reduces workload and costs for the health care system.

97% of appointments
are completed within 30 days
of the requested date

On the Road

VA Pittsburgh staff attended **96 Pittsburgh-area events** in 2015, enrolling **1,084 new users**.

Our biggest enrollment event of the year was the Marines Corps Reserve muster. At this event alone, VA Pittsburgh staff:

- » **Completed 105 applications.**
- » **Enrolled 321 Veterans.**
- » **Scheduled 14 Veterans for appointments.**



Butterfly Memorial August

Employees, Veterans and family gathered to remember Veterans who passed away in the previous year.



Mass Casualty Drill September

VA Pittsburgh emergency department held a mass casualty decontamination drill.

THE BEST CARE ANYWHERE

Virtual care connects Veterans with VA Pittsburgh health care providers without traveling to Pittsburgh.

TeleDementia Clinic Provides Rural Veterans with Access to Pittsburgh Experts

VA Pittsburgh health care providers have a tool that is proving more and more useful in treating Veterans without requiring repeated or long-distance travel to treatment facilities. Virtual care connects Veterans with health care providers electronically to save time and travel and offer the quality care only experts at VA Pittsburgh can provide.

Virtual care has long been used for mental health care with a VA psychologist, psychiatrist or nurse practitioner communicating via video teleconference with Veterans in their homes, at outpatient clinics or at Vet Centers. But Dr. Michelle Rossi has recently received national recognition for VA Pittsburgh's TeleDementia clinic, where a multidisciplinary team virtually provides comprehensive care to rural Veterans with cognitive decline.

A development of the Geriatric Research Education & Clinical Centers program, TeleDementia service provides Veterans individualized care based on diagnosis and treatment plans developed by the team in Pittsburgh, specialists who would not be available at their local community-based outpatient clinic.

200 + Veterans
are using telemental services
at any given time



Virtual Care

Nearly 36,000 Veterans (about 55 percent of our patients) connect virtually with caregivers.

24,690

Telehealth encounters completed

7,664

Telemental health care encounters completed

30,273

Secure messages sent

5,093

E-consult encounters completed



Car Show September

Nearly a dozen classic cars visited the H.J. Heinz campus for the annual car cruise and Veterans Day celebration.



Visit from the Under Secretary of Health November

Under Secretary of Health David Shulkin spoke with Dr. Brooke Decker about infection prevention efforts during his visit to Pittsburgh.

WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

Comprehensive primary and specialty care for more than 4,000 female Veterans

Our specially trained women's health care providers perform gynecological exams, preventative care for colon, breast and cervical cancers, and coordinate with specialty providers, ensuring a continuum of care for female Veterans of all ages.

In 2015, female Veterans gained access to a specialized physical therapist, a breast and reproductive cancer and oncology navigator, and pastoral care via telehealth at our community based outpatient clinics. Additionally, we added an automated screening reminder ensuring Veterans of childbearing age are not taking medications harmful to an unborn child.

RESEARCH

Improving the lives of Veterans across the country

VA Pittsburgh launched the Center for Medical Product End-User Testing in January 2015, which will evaluate three high-priority medical devices commonly used in treating Veterans: external defibrillators, electrosurgical units and smart infusion pumps.

283 Research Projects
conducted in 2015

VA Pittsburgh researchers are also helping to address the nationwide opioid abuse epidemic. One researcher is studying the causes and consequences of patients using multiple health care systems—VA care, as well as non-VA care—to access prescriptions.

VOLUNTARY SERVICE

The heart and soul of VA Pittsburgh

Veterans receiving care at VA Pittsburgh can thank a dedicated corps of volunteers, many of whom are Veterans, for amenities and assistance around the facility.

From popcorn in Heroes Hall to the University Drive coffee cart and daily activities on both campuses, VA Pittsburgh's team of volunteers epitomizes our commitment to serving Veterans. In 2015, **nearly 800 volunteers spent more than 111,000 hours serving Veterans** at VA Pittsburgh. That includes service hours provided by **124 youth volunteers**.



Clothing Drive
December

VA Pittsburgh employees donated women's business clothes to assist Veterans needing office work attire.



Holiday Stockings
December

Austin and Valerie Salla dropped off holiday stockings for inpatient Veterans in honor of Austin's father, a Veteran who passed away last year.

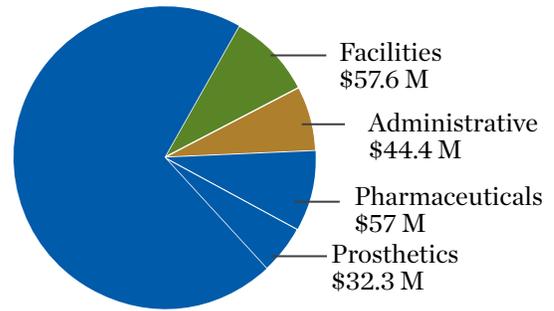
SELECT SYSTEM-WIDE

Veterans Served by Conflict



Financial Snapshot

\$643.5 M Operating Budget



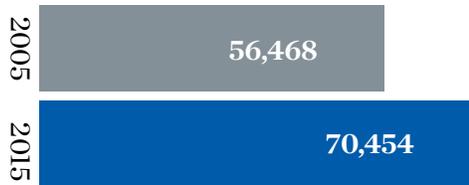
Salaries: \$350.2 M

Information and Technology: \$5.9 M

**includes \$24.1M in first- and third-party collections*

A Decade of Growth

VETERANS SERVED



OUTPATIENT VISITS



FEMALE VETERANS SERVED



Employee Overview

3,670

Employees

33 percent are Veterans

889 Nurses • 264 Physicians

Education Emphasis

1,495

Medical professionals trained

270+

Academic affiliations

STATISTICS

Accreditations

Area or Program	Accrediting Organization
Hospital, Behavioral Health, Home Care and Nursing Care Center	The Joint Commission
Opioid Treatment Program	The Joint Commission
Intensive Rehabilitation Program	Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities
Behavioral Health and Employment and Community Services	Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities
Interdisciplinary Pain Rehabilitation Program	Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities
Cancer Program	The American College of Surgeon's Commission on Cancer
Radiation Therapy and Oncology Program	American College of Radiology
Laboratory Services	College of American Pathology
Blood Bank	American Association of Blood Banks
Research Program	Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care
Research Program	Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs
Intermediate Low Vision Clinic	Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities

Awards and Accomplishments

Supported the career development of **199 Veterans** through our Homeless Veterans Supported Employment Program.

Received a **platinum Fine Award for Teamwork Excellence in Health Care** for revamped policies and procedures for anesthesia, surgery and recovery for joint replacement patients.

Honored Leslie R. M. Hausmann, PhD for receiving the **Secretary's Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Award** for her efforts to increase the representation of less than expected groups in the health sciences by mentoring diverse students in clinical research activities.

Our doctors performed **5,710 Surgeries** including:

- **49** Kidney transplants
- **31** Liver transplants

Facility Enhancement

OPERATION ROOM EXPANSION

Completed in July 2015, our 14-bed post-anesthesia care unit includes improved support space for equipment and supply storage, and staff break and locker areas.

Two 1,000-square-foot operating rooms are expected to be completed in 2016. These rooms will support our robotic surgery program and include improved storage areas for operating rooms, anesthesia and equipment.

These upgrades will help reduce current wait times for surgical procedures and improve efficiency.

VA PITTSBURGH SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Karin McGraw, MSN, FACHE
Medical Center Director

Ali Sonel, M.D.
Chief of Staff

Barbara Forsha, MSN, CPHQ, CPPS, ET
Deputy Director

Lovetta Ford, MSW
Associate Director

Ira Richmond, DNP, RN, NEA-BC
Associate Director for Patient Services

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