To care for those “WHO SHALL HAVE BORNE THE BATTLE” and for their families and survivors.
Reflecting on my first year as medical center director at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, I feel blessed to be part of an organization committed to providing Veterans with the best available health care and services.

At VA Pittsburgh, it is our honor to keep Veterans and their families safe and healthy. In 2016, our talented and dedicated employees provided high-quality health care to more than 70,000 Veterans who trusted us to meet their unique needs.

Over the past year, we transformed into a more Veteran-centric organization, enhancing access through same-day services, secure messaging and direct scheduling of optometry and audiology appointments. A leader in innovation, we were recognized in 2016 as setting the national VA standard for anesthesia recovery. In research, 8,500 Pittsburgh-area Veterans signed up to participate in the Million Veteran Program in the past five years.

Those are just a few of our accomplishments in 2016. As you browse this report, you will discover many more reasons Veterans entrust their health care to us.

Thank you, Veterans, for joining me on this journey to a productive and rewarding first year.

Karin McGraw, MSN, FACHE
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
Medical Center Director

On the cover: VA Pittsburgh surgeons perform a kidney transplant. See page 7 to learn more about our surgical services.
ENHANCING ACCESS

It’s important for Veterans to be in control of their health care.

In 2016, we shed old systems that were in place for decades in favor of contemporary access initiatives that work for Veterans.

Same-Day Service in Primary Care

We achieved same-day service in primary care in August, enabling us to address Veterans’ health needs the same day through face-to-face appointments, returned phone calls, secure messaging, scheduling of future appointments, or telehealth services.

Telehealth uses secure video conferencing technology to provide care to Veterans virtually. VA Pittsburgh providers speak with Veterans at other VA locations to make evaluations or provide certain therapies or treatments. Providers may also gather data which they store and forward for diagnosis and treatment. Other telehealth services are home-based.

Since 1996, our mental health professionals have provided immediate care to Veterans who are in crisis or in need of urgent mental health treatment. We added same-day, walk-in medication services in 2014 (weekdays through 4 p.m.), and Veterans new to behavioral health with non-urgent needs receive an initial evaluation by the next calendar day.

A VA Pittsburgh specialist provides one-on-one speech-language treatment to a patient via Clinical Video Telehealth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>35,447 Unique Secure Messaging Encounters</th>
<th>25,682 Telehealth Encounters Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52% of VA Pittsburgh Veterans use secure messaging</td>
<td>7,955 Telemental health care encounters provided for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>national goal: 25%</td>
<td>2,309 unique patients</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6,799 Unique Patients Served Via E-consult</th>
<th>18% of VA Pittsburgh Veterans use Telehealth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>133% increase in unique e-consults</td>
<td>Telehealth national goal: 16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E-consults are electronic consults between providers that allow for quicker diagnoses and delivery of clinically appropriate care.

Telehealth services include Clinical Video Telehealth, Store and Forward Telehealth, and Home Telehealth.
Direct Scheduling Audiology and Optometry

In 2016, Veterans enrolled at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System were among the first in the nation to schedule their own routine audiology and optometry appointments.

VA Pittsburgh participated in the first phase of VA’s national rollout of direct scheduling to audiology and optometry clinics. Direct scheduling saves Veterans time because they no longer must visit their primary care physician for referrals for routine ear and eye clinic appointments.

Routine audiology care includes hearing tests, hearing aid services, balance assessments, cochlear implant services and evaluation and management of tinnitus (ringing or buzzing in ear). Routine optometry services include eye exams for glasses or adjustments in vision prescription, and providing and fitting of eyeglasses.

Direct scheduling of routine audiology and optometry appointments reduces Veterans’ wait times and improves access to primary care doctors for other health care services.

To make an appointment, Veterans can call:
Audiology (hearing): 412-360-6400
Optometry (vision): 412-360-6700

Rapid Access Clinics

Through our Rapid Access Clinic program in 2016, we expedited the scheduling of follow-up appointments for Veterans seen in our Emergency Department.

With dedicated appointment slots set aside in 18 specialty clinics, Emergency Department staff schedule referral appointments before Veterans leave the hospital. Immediate scheduling of follow-up care increases patient and provider satisfaction, improves clinical outcomes and lowers health care costs.
DELIVERING EXCEPTIONAL CARE

Caring for Veterans is our calling, not just a job. We reach higher to provide the best quality health care.

SimLEARN

Simulation-based training improves quality of care, safety, access and outcomes for all Veterans. Our Simulation Learning, Education and Research Network (SimLEARN) Center in 2016 earned Advanced Level certification, joining only five other VA facilities nationwide in achieving top-tier certification.

Through SimLEARN, our doctors, nurses and health care workers practice everything from lifesaving skills on mannequins that mimic breathing and heartbeats to interacting with patients through role playing.

Our new state-of-the-art SimLEARN Center is slated to open in 2017-18.

“Practicing in a safe and supportive learning environment where it is acceptable to fail and try again improves the quality of clinical education and contributes to patient safety.”

– Susan Hoehl, designated learning officer and administrative director, simulation program

Health care professionals practice and learn new skills on lifelike mannequins in our SimLEARN Center.
Taking Health Care to Heart

7 Years
AHA Get With the Guidelines awards
In June 2016, the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association presented VA Pittsburgh with its prestigious Get With The Guidelines® - Heart Failure Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award and its Atrial Fibrillation Silver Quality Achievement Award. The awards recognize VA Pittsburgh for following the latest scientific guidelines in heart care that are proven to increase survival rates and lower patients’ risk of returning to the hospital.

Welcoming LGBT Veterans

3 Years
LGBT Healthcare Equality Leader
We treat all Veterans with dignity and respect. We are proud the Human Rights Campaign’s Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) in 2016 recognized VA Pittsburgh as a Leader in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Healthcare Equality for providing nondiscriminatory, inclusive, sensitive and welcoming health care to LGBT Veterans.

Surgical Excellence

Surgical Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>36</th>
<th>54</th>
<th>7,041</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liver transplants</td>
<td>Kidney transplants (5 living donors)</td>
<td>Surgical procedures (1,300 more than FY15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VA Pittsburgh’s world-class surgical teams provide a wide range of services to Veterans from throughout the region. From minor same-day procedures to robotic assisted surgeries to complex surgical procedures requiring multidisciplinary surgical teams, VA Pittsburgh’s surgical capabilities provide Veterans the surgical care they need without requiring travel to distant medical facilities.

Specialized surgical services available at VA Pittsburgh include cardiothoracic and general surgery, hand surgery, neurosurgery, ophthalmology, orthopedic surgery, otolaryngology, plastic surgery, vascular surgery and transplant services. Receiving surgical care at VA Pittsburgh ensures a continuity of care from primary care to specialists and makes follow-up care and recovery easier and more efficient for Veterans.
ENGAGING EMPLOYEES

We empower our employees to contribute beyond everyday expectations, giving meaning to their work and a clear view of its impact on Veterans.

EXPOceptional inspires innovation

Our EXPOceptional program entered its third year in 2016, inspiring employee innovation and creativity in Veteran-centric care. Through storyboard displays, employees have showcased 90 improvement projects and ideas since 2013. Veterans, visitors and employees offered written feedback, signed up to participate in initiatives and voted on their favorite storyboards. Adopted ideas include enhancements to telehealth programs, Veteran education, software and technology.

IMPLEMENTED: Two Step Fix

VA Pittsburgh’s EXPOceptional program inspired a multi-disciplinary team to simplify a cumbersome clinical-reminder process from 40 steps to just two. The fix immediately resets clinical reminder dates for diabetic eye exams, reducing duplicate appointments and ensuring Veterans are up to date on exams.

Employees browse storyboard displays describing new ideas and programs to benefit Veterans’ health care during an EXPOceptional event.
Environmental Stewardship

Practice Greenhealth in 2016 awarded VA Pittsburgh its Greenhealth Emerald Award for our successes in reducing our environmental footprint. The award recognized VA Pittsburgh for our significant strides in improving energy efficiency, developing new ways to reduce waste, identifying opportunities to increase recycling and replacing chemicals with “green” alternatives.

Huddle Up for Improved Care

VA Pittsburgh rolled out Huddle Boards in 2016 to engage employees to explore ways to increase efficiency, improve Veterans’ care and eliminate waste. The 15-minute voluntary huddles empower employees to suggest and implement positive changes on a daily basis. More than 400 employees now participate, with more to follow in 2017.

Veteran Shadow Program

In 2016, we piloted a new program pairing employees with volunteer Veterans as the Veterans receive care in our facilities. The Veteran Shadow Program puts employees on the other side of health care—as patients instead of providers—to help us identify and fix challenges Veterans experience during visits.

“We want employees to experience a visit to our facility just as a Veteran does, to see for themselves what works well, and what can be improved.”

– Elizabeth Marinella, patient advocate

Employees accompany volunteer Veterans in our facilities to identify areas in need of improvement.

OUR PEOPLE. YOUR CARE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Volunteer hours</th>
<th>Youth volunteers</th>
<th>are Veterans</th>
<th>Nurses</th>
<th>Physicians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>718</td>
<td>3,755</td>
<td>106,905</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LEADING THROUGH INNOVATION

Through collaboration and teamwork, our clinicians and researchers pave new paths forward in Veterans’ health care.

Hep C Research

VA innovator Dr. Alex Chidi and a team of multidisciplinary researchers from the Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion explored the economics of giving costly new hepatitis C medications to all Veterans seeking treatment, not just those with service-connected infections or advanced liver disease. Treating all Veterans with the new drugs, the study showed, is the most cost-effective option in the long run.

Congress in 2016 subsequently increased funding to allow VA providers throughout the country to screen and treat all Veterans infected with the virus.

Chidi replicated the cost-savings findings in a University of Pittsburgh hepatitis C research project for Medicaid/Medicare patients. She was recognized for her work when selected to introduce President Barack Obama during the 2016 White House Frontiers Conference in Pittsburgh.

“Today, I work at the intersection of medicine, economics and health policy to make a business case for eliminating health disparities,” Chidi said in her introduction. “I am committed to working across disciplines to achieve cost-effective solutions to help ensure everyone has access to emerging technologies, pharmaceutical advancements, surgical interventions and breakthroughs in personalized medicine.”

Research at a glance

$30,357,507 Research funding
113 Research investigators
343 Research projects
32 Published journal articles

$100,000 received to establish a national coordinating center for VA’s Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) Interprofessional Fellowship in Addiction Treatment Research
WAKE Score Sets VA Anesthesia Standard

VA Pittsburgh in 2016 set the standard for anesthesia recovery with our patient-centered WAKE Score, recognized by the Veterans Health Administration as a Gold Status best practice to be emulated at VA facilities nationwide.

Our anesthetics for surgery are designed to meet the WAKE Score, which has zero tolerance for nausea, vomiting, pain, shivering, itching and lightheadedness—common side effects of anesthesia. Veterans now experience far fewer side effects after surgery, allowing for earlier release from the recovery room. Some even bypass the recovery room altogether.

“Our Veterans come to the recovery room awake, and from the anesthesia perspective, are ready to be reunited with their families as soon as 15 minutes after leaving the operating room,” said Dr. Brian Williams, VA Pittsburgh’s director of ambulatory anesthesia.

VHA leadership in 2016 deemed our WAKE Score one of the top 13 innovations in VA care across the nation, encouraging other facilities to adopt and implement the practice to create better, safer and higher quality experiences for Veterans.

Million Veteran Program

8,500 Pittsburgh-area Veterans signed on to participate in the last five years

The Million Veteran Program (MVP) links genetic, clinical, lifestyle and military-exposure information to help researchers learn about the role of genes in health and disease. More than 500,000 Veterans nationally are participating with a goal of 1 million enrolled Veterans.

Voluntary and anonymous, MVP is the world’s largest database of health and genomic information. It is a cornerstone of VAs efforts to improve Veterans’ health.

“What’s great is that even though we haven’t reached one million veterans, there are already studies underway using MVP data,” said Beatrice Chakraborty, MVP coordinator at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System.

Learn more: Call 1-866-441-6075 or visit www.research.va.gov/mvp/
EMBRACING ACCOUNTABILITY

In 2016, we committed to delivering timely access to earned health care for Veterans. Transparency is the key to measuring our progress.

Reaching Out with Town Halls On the Move

When Veterans speak, we listen. And act.

In 2016, at the request of Veterans who attend our Town Halls in Pittsburgh, we took to the road with our first Town Hall on the Move. The new series connects VA Pittsburgh leadership directly with Veterans in their communities, easing access for those who live outside the city.

Our Town Halls and Town Halls on the Move are open forums for Veterans and their supporters to ask questions, express concerns and share their experiences with VA care. Representatives from the Veterans Benefits Administration attend to immediately address individual Veterans’ benefits questions.

We will continue to alternate quarterly town halls between our University Drive and H.J. Heinz campuses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town Hall Schedule</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>March 15</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>University Drive campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>April 4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmoreland County</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>May 16</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Beaver County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>May 25</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Belmont County (Ohio)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>June 20</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>H.J. Heinz campus</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>July 12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sept. 26</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>University Drive campus</td>
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</table>

Medical Center Director Karin McGraw answers Veterans questions during a Town Hall Meeting at VA Pittsburgh’s H.J. Heinz campus.
Connecting with Community Providers

300% Increase in the number of participating agencies, from 9 in 2014 to 36 in 2016

The Veteran Community Partnership (VCP) strengthens two-way communications between VA and community organizations, building collaborative relationships to better serve Veterans’ needs. It enhances Veteran-centric care by educating community organizations on Veterans’ distinct health care needs; training front-line staff on Veterans’ programs, eligibility and resources; and facilitating seamless care by identifying areas where organizations intersect.

VCP’s work will become even more important as health care trends toward providing the seriously ill with in-home care: Community providers often are unaware of Veterans’ specific needs, including PTSD and Agent Orange exposure.

Looking forward to 2017, VCP’s expansion plans include forming additional partnerships with behavioral health community services, inviting Veterans and their families to attend events, and hosting disease-specific events (such as COPD).

Stop the Line Patient Safety

At VA Pittsburgh, patient safety is everyone’s responsibility. Through our Stop the Line Patient Safety initiative, we encourage all employees to speak up immediately anytime a patient’s safety is at risk—without risk of retribution.

In 2016, we deployed the Stop the Line safety initiative to clerical and administrative personnel, prioritizing Veterans’ well-being and safety while encouraging proactive, personalized, patient-driven care.

National Time Out Day


VA Pittsburgh marked National Time Out Day in 2016 with a daylong series of educational events reminding surgical team members to speak up for safe practices in the operating room. Our surgical teams pause prior to each procedure to ensure they are performing the right procedure on the right patient at the right site.
We served Veterans from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, the Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Who we serve. Where they served.

Data accurate as of October 2016.
FY2016 Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPERATING EXPENSE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prosthetics</td>
<td>$36.5M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>$54.6M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>$45.2M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>$60.8M</td>
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ADDITIONAL:
- $5M Office of Information & Technology
- $23.6M Medical Care Collection Fund (first- and third-party collections)