

# Health Education News

## The Veterans Health Library

### *Drum roll, please . . .*

The Office of Veterans Health Education and Information, through the VHA Preventive Care Program, announces a new national contract for a VHA-wide Veterans Health Library. The contract has been awarded to Krames/Staywell, a patient education services company that was selected by an internal VHA Source Selection Evaluation Board as the most comprehensive resource for consistent, patient-centered health education and information for Veterans and family members. The Veterans Health Library will be integrated into the My HealthVet portal, and its topics will span the continuum of VHA healthcare delivery. It will be available to Veterans and family members in the community and in all VHA health care delivery settings, no matter where a Veteran receives care.



Krames/Staywell, which was founded in 1974, is a market leader in patient education and consumer health information solutions. More than 85% of American hospitals, including 70% of VA hospitals and medical facilities, currently use Krames/Staywell resources to improve quality of care and patient satisfaction and to comply with The Joint Commission standards. Krames/Staywell offers a wide array of educational tools for patients and consumers, as well as communication and teaching aids for caregivers. Its robust library includes more than 1,500 printed booklets and brochures, 3,300 brief fact sheets covering specific health topics, 400 patient education videos and more than 2,000 drug information sheets, available in both English and Spanish. The Library will also incorporate VHA-specific content.

HEALTH EDUCATION NEWS

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The Library will also be available to family members, to help them support the Veteran's active involvement in health care and the self-care strategies needed to promote health or to manage chronic or acute conditions.

The Library's educational resources will be available in print, electronic and audiovisual formats, as well as VHA-approved social media (e.g., texting, blogging, Twitter) and other emerging technologies.



Library content will be developed and formatted in accordance with Veterans' health literacy needs and will also accommodate Veterans with physical and visual impairments.

The Library will provide Veterans and family members with health education materials and information that will help them:

- Prepare for clinical encounters
- Understand their conditions and treatment plans
- Communicate effectively with their health care team members
- Actively partner with their provider and health care team members
- Share in health care decision making
- Self-monitor and self-manage chronic conditions
- Prepare for transition to other areas of care

The Veterans Health Library, which is projected to be operational within all facilities by the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2011, will be integral to patient-centered care and to the Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) program. It will represent a tangible commitment to "empowering Veterans through education and information," which is one of VHA's core principles of Veteran-centered care.



**Becky Hartt Minor, MA**  
Health Educator  
Veterans Health Education and Information

*"empowering Veterans through education and information"*

## Prescription Drug Overdose Prevention

*Remember:*

*Your Name*

*Your Script*

*Your Responsibility*



Prescriptions for health can turn into a dangerous cocktail when ill-used. **Unintentional drug overdose is the second leading cause of injury death in the home.**<sup>1</sup> Do not combine or add medications without a doctor or pharmacist's approval. It can possibly lead to harmful reactions, poisoning . . . even death.

It's important to:

- Store medications out of the reach of children
- Use prescriptions only for their intended use
- Consult a doctor or pharmacist before combining medications to ensure there are no harmful interactions.



<sup>1</sup>National Safety Council Injury Facts, 2010 Edition. Information supplied by the National Safety Council

# What is a Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT)?

## AHRQ's Definition of the Medical Home

The medical home model holds promise as a way to improve health care in America by transforming how primary care is organized and delivered. Building on the work of a large and growing community, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) defines a medical home not simply as a place but as a model of the organization of primary care that delivers the core functions of primary health care.



workers, educators and care coordinators. Although some medical home practices may bring together large and diverse teams of care providers to meet the needs of their patients, many others, including smaller practices, will build virtual teams linking themselves and their patients to providers and services in their communities.

The medical home encompasses five functions and attributes:

- **Patient-centered:** The primary care medical home provides primary health care that is relationship-based with an orientation toward the whole person. Partnering with patients and their families requires understanding and respecting each patient's unique needs, culture, values and preferences. The medical home practice actively supports patients in learning to manage and organize their own care at the level the patient chooses. Recognizing that patients and families are core members of the care team, medical home practices ensure that they are fully informed partners in establishing care plans.



- **Coordinated care:** The primary care medical home coordinates care across all elements of the broader health care system, including specialty care, hospitals, home health care and community services and supports. Such coordination is particularly critical during transitions between sites of care, such as when patients are being discharged from the hospital. Medical home practices also excel at building clear and open communication among patients and families, the medical home and members of the broader care team.
- **Superb access to care:** The primary care medical home delivers accessible services with shorter waiting times for urgent needs, enhanced in-person hours, around-the-clock telephone or electronic access to a member of the care team and alternative methods of communication such as email and telephone care. The medical home practice is responsive to patients' preferences regarding access.



- **Comprehensive care:** The primary care medical home is accountable for meeting the large majority of each patient's physical and mental health care needs, including prevention and wellness, acute care and chronic care.

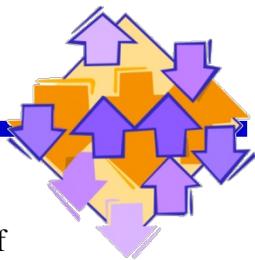
Providing comprehensive care requires a team of care providers. This team might include physicians, advanced practice nurses, physician assistants, nurses, pharmacists, nutritionists, social



- **A systems-based approach to quality and safety:** The primary care medical home demonstrates a commitment to quality and quality improvement by ongoing engagement in activities such as using evidence-based medicine and clinical decision-support tools to guide shared decision making with patients and families, engaging in performance measurement and improvement, measuring and responding to patient experiences and patient satisfaction and practicing population health management. Sharing robust quality and safety data and improvement activities publicly is also an important marker of a system-level commitment to quality.

AHRQ recognizes the central role of health IT in successfully operationalizing and implementing the key features of the medical home. Additionally, AHRQ notes that building a primary care delivery platform that the Nation can rely on for accessible, affordable, high-quality health care will require significant workforce development and fundamental payment reform. Without these critical elements, the potential of primary care will not be achieved.

## The Highs and Lows of Blood Counts



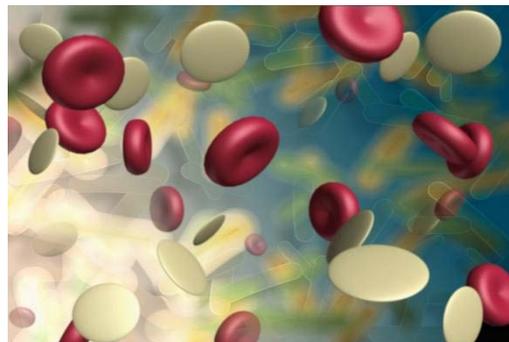
A **Complete Blood Count** is performed to measure the levels of the different types of cells in your body. Blood is made up of three types of cells: red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets. All three types, working together, perform vital bodily tasks.

Your CBC (complete blood count) consists of:

- RBC (red blood cells)
- HGB (Hemoglobin)
- HCT (Hematocrit)
- MCV (Mean Corpuscular Volume)
- MCH (Mean Corpuscular Hemoglobin)
- MCHC (Mean Corpuscular Hemoglobin Concentration)
- PLT (Platelets)
- WBC (White Blood Cells).

### Red Blood Cells

Red blood cells reflect the oxygen carrying capacity of blood. A decrease in red blood cells is commonly called anemia. There are different causes for different types of anemia.



An increase in red blood cells is commonly called polycythemia. Normal range of RBC is 4.7 – 6.1. However, hemoglobin and hematocrit readings are used more readily to assess blood status.

**Hgb = hemoglobin:** reflects the oxygen carrying capacity of your blood (normal range = 13 – 18).

**Hct = hematocrit:** indirect measure of RBC mass; helpful in determining type of anemia.

Also helpful in determining type of anemia:

- MCV = Mean Corpuscular Volume
- MCHC = Mean Corpuscular Hemoglobin Concentration
- MCH = Mean Corpuscular Hemoglobin
- RDW = Red Cell Size Distribution Width

### Platelets (PLT)

- Blood cells that are necessary for blood clotting: help control bleeding
- Normal platelet count = 141-150
- Decreased platelet counts mean a greater risk for bleeding .
- Increased platelet counts mean a greater risk for clotting .

Next issue: *Looking at WBC and risk for infection*

**Karen Reider, RN, MSN**  
Truman VA, Columbia, MO

**Melissa S. Davies, LMSW**



I joined the VISN 15 team in September 2008 to serve Veterans and their families as the My HealtheVet VISN Coordinator. Since graduating from the University at Buffalo (UB) with my Masters in Social Work (MSW) in 2008, I have served Veterans, active-duty personnel and their families at the VA. Before coming to VA Heartland Network, I worked with the Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) Clinic at VA Western New York Healthcare System in Buffalo, NY.

As My HealtheVet VISN Coordinator, I am able to continue to provide excellent service to our Veterans, active-duty personnel and their families through the My HealtheVet website. The website allows Veterans to store their health information, track their vital statistics like blood sugar and blood pressure levels, look up health resources, refill their VA prescriptions and more. My HealtheVet is another tool for Veterans and VA providers to help VA patients live healthy lives. To learn more and register, please visit My HealtheVet at [www.MyHealth.va.gov](http://www.MyHealth.va.gov).

VA's award winning My HealtheVet website will be growing in the next five years, offering more features to aid our Veteran users in taking control of their health. One new feature is Secure Messaging, which will be available during 2011 and 2012. It will connect VA patients to their providers at VA. It is exciting to be a part of this growth. I look forward to being able to say thank you to the men and women that served our country by providing them with the tools to take control of their health. Thank you for your service.

## **VA Website is a Personal Tool for Employees and Veterans**

### **Five Reasons You Should Be Using My HealtheVet**

- 1 Be empowered to control your health.** You can update the status of your Personal Health Record 24/7, refill your VA prescriptions online and e-journal, all on our award-winning, easy to use website.
- 2 Avoid duplicate tests and procedures.** You can enter results from previous self-entered diagnostics tests and procedures that can be shared with your non-VA providers and you can update your Personal Health Record before each visit.
- 3 Move easily from doctor to doctor.** You are armed with information that eases the transition from VA providers to non-VA providers.
- 4 Improve the efficiency and safety of your health care.** Updated, accurate health records save patients and caregivers valuable time, help prevent unwanted drug interactions and help inform you of your diagnoses and treatments.
- 5 Get personalized VA Wellness Reminders.** Online access enables you to view a personalized calendar with local VA activities and receive online VA Wellness information.

**LOG ON. SIGN UP. TODAY!**

Adapted from an announcement of the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Health Information



# Shining Light on Vitamin D!

Nationally, vitamin D has been a recent topic of conversation. The number of people having inadequate levels of Vitamin D in their blood has increased and deficiencies can be found in all ethnicities and age groups. Being vitamin D deficient may increase the risk of a variety of chronic diseases including osteoporosis, heart disease, some cancers, multiple sclerosis and other infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and the seasonal flu.

Known as *“the sunshine vitamin,”* many people receive adequate vitamin D from spending 10 to 30 minutes in the sun several times a week. However, those who avoid the sun, cover their bodies with sunscreen or clothing while outdoors, people with dark skin, people who are obese or who have undergone gastric bypass surgery, older adults or those who live in the northern half of the United States during the winter months have increased risk of developing a vitamin D deficiency. If you fall into one of these categories or are concerned about your levels, ask your doctor to order a simple vitamin D blood test.

Vitamin D is a nutrient that we eat and a hormone our bodies make. Top dietary sources of vitamin D include dairy products, breakfast cereals, orange juice and margarines which are fortified with vitamin D plus fatty fish such as salmon and tuna.

Below are the Institute of Medicine’s recommended intake levels:

Age	Vitamin D measured in International Units (IU)
Up to age 50	200 IU
Ages 51 to 70	400 IU
Age 70+	600 IU

Since few foods contain natural sources of vitamin D, for many people the best way to get enough vitamin D is by taking a supplement. Some multivitamins contain vitamin D, but the level is often too low. If your multivitamin contains less than 1,000 IU of vitamin D, you may want to speak with your healthcare provider about adding an additional vitamin D supplement.

With the winter months approaching, remember to ask your healthcare provider for a simple blood test to check your vitamin D levels. Try to include fortified foods and fatty fish in your dietary meal planning and ask about taking a vitamin D supplement if needed.

**Kristine Jamerson MS, RD, LD**  
St. Louis MOVE! Program Dietitian



## Secure Messaging Pilot at Wichita

## A message from the V ISN 15 Health Education Chairperson

As you may have heard, there are some exciting changes coming to VA to improve care to Veterans. One of the exciting changes is Secure Messaging.

Secure messaging is a way for Veterans to communicate NON-URGENT issues with their primary care team via My HealthVet. The Wichita VAMC and its six Community Based Outpatient Clinics is the first facility in VISN 15 to offer Secure Messaging. We are in the process of identifying Veterans who use My HealthVet, have completed the In-Person Authentication process and wish to Secure Message with their primary care provider. Many Veterans are already using My HealthVet to refill prescriptions, look up health information and track their personal health.

In adding Secure Messaging, you will be able to ask your primary care team non-urgent questions and get a response within 72 hours. We are excited to offer Secure Messaging and advance the way you access your health care, making feedback and responses from your healthcare team only a few simple clicks away. Look for Secure Messaging to be offered at your facility in the near future.



Cathy Steele

As the holiday season approaches, it becomes more important for us to take care of ourselves. Along with holidays comes additional stress and anxiety for many of us. Finding a way to alleviate or manage the stress is important for our health.



Yoga can relieve stress, but it can do so much more than that. Yoga has also been shown to reduce inflammation that plays a major role in chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease and arthritis. Why is yoga so effective at minimizing stress and inflammation? A study by Dr. William Malarkey, MD, suggests that yoga increases a person's flexibility, which promotes relaxation, thereby curbing the stress response.

So, over the holidays, take some time for yourself. Try out a yoga class or even practice a few simple yoga moves in your home. There are a wealth of books and videos available for purchase at local bookstores. Most local libraries also have a large variety of information on yoga practice. You could also check with a local gym, YMCA or even your VA medical center to find a guided yoga class near you.

Rachael Beard, RN

## Consider Quitting? Consider This...

In welcoming in the New Year, many people make goals for themselves for the upcoming year. For some people, one of these goals might be to quit smoking. For other people, their goal might be to consider quitting smoking. If you fall into one of the these two groups, Truman Memorial Veteran's hospital has a program for you.

Beginning in January, 2011, we will be offering a new smoking cessation program. It's a two part program. The first is an informational group to help you decide if quitting and our program is right for you. The second part is a 7 week quit class in which we will give you all the tools and support you need to quit and stay quit, as well as quit together as a group during our fourth week. Interested individuals should contact their primary care provider for a referral.

Benefits of quitting smoking are numerous and include improved health and healing, cost savings and, for some, improved mental health. Specifics regarding these benefits will be detailed during the class. For many people, particularly those that have smoked for many years, considering quitting smoking is like considering giving up a best friend—very frightening! In this class, you will learn other, more healthy ways of managing stress and meet people who can support you in your endeavor. In essence, you'll learn both how to be your own best friend as well as perhaps make a few new friends. Or, if you are not sure if you're quite ready to quit just yet, you can come to the informational group to learn some of the benefits of quitting and more about what it would be like.

This year, start the New Year off right. Do something for yourself that will have lasting rewards year after year. Give it a thought...then give your primary care team a call!

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**Autumn Keefer, PhD.,**  
Health Behavior Coordinator

**Melissa VanSteenburgh, LCSW,**  
HPDP Program Manager

## My HealthVet at Truman VA

Are you registered on My HealthVet, VA's online personal health record? Registered patients can track their health and upgrade their account by completing an In-Person Authentication (IPA) or proofing process.

After you register online and watch the orientation video, you may visit the medical center or community-based outpatient clinics to complete the process. You will need to bring your government issued identification. **At the medical center, IPA process is completed in the Release of Information office in Room E002.**

With an upgraded account, patients have access to enhanced features from VA such as access to detailed information on VA prescription refills and VA wellness reminders. The IPA process provides Veterans with the ability to utilize future enhanced features as they become available in My HealthVet.

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**Andrea Wiggins**  
My HealthVet Coordinator