White River Junction
VA Medical Center

Healthcare for Veterans in Vermont
Overview of White River Junction VA Medical Center
January 16th, 2015
White River Junction VA Medical Center

- Opened October 17, 1938
- Level 2 Acute Care Facility
- 60 bed capacity
  - 43 bed Med/Surg capacity
  - 7 bed ICU
  - 10 bed inpatient Mental Health Ward
- 14 bed Residential Recovery Center
- 7 Community Based Outpatient Clinics & Extensive Telehealth
  - 5 in Vermont and 2 in New Hampshire
  - Over 5680 TeleHealth visits FY14
- Affiliations with over 60 Academic Institutions
WRJ VAMC Operations

- Treats over 25,500 Veterans a year
  - Approximately 17,300 from Vermont
  - Approximately 8,200 from New Hampshire
- Approximately 72,250 total Veterans in catchment area
  - 49,900 in Vermont
  - 22,350 in New Hampshire
- Sees approximately 3500 OEF/OIF/OND Veterans annually
- Over 263,000 outpatient visits in FY14
- Annual Budget ~ $186 million
- Home to 5 national VA Centers
  - National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
  - Field Office to the VA National Center for Patient Safety
  - VA National Quality Scholars Fellowship Program
  - VA National Outcomes Program
  - The New England Healthcare Engineering Partnership
White River Junction VA access:

- Overall access is very good
- 23,976 pending appointments as of January 1, 2015
- Percent of appointment scheduled 30 days for less – 97.3
- Prospective Wait Times (waiting time for a future appointment):
  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Days</th>
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<tr>
<td>Primary Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialty Care</td>
<td>3.87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental Health Care</td>
<td>1.11</td>
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- Enhancing Access to Care
  - Expanded hours at Medical Center and Community Based Outpatient Clinics
  - Expanded Saturday Clinics
  - MRI Services available until 8 p.m. weekdays
  - Audiology available 6 days per week
  - Physical Therapy available 6 days per week
WRJ VAMC Major Initiatives

- Access for Veterans in Rural Areas:
  - Expansion of Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)
  - TeleHealth Program Expansion
- Focus on Health and Wellness
- Comprehensive Women’s Health
- Specialized Mental Health Services
- Veteran Homeless Program
- Comprehensive Pain Management Program
- Research Program
Major Initiative

Expanding Access: Increasing Points of Care

• Expanded Community Based Outpatient Clinics: 7 CBOCs
  **Vermont:** Burlington, Bennington, Rutland, Newport, Brattleboro
  **New Hampshire:** Littleton, Keene

• VA sites of care be established in Colebrook, Berlin, NH
  – To serve over 2100 Eligible Veterans in Coos County
  – Primary Care, Mental Health and TeleHealth services

• Explore collaboration with Federally Qualified Healthcare Center (FQHC) in Barre/Montpelier area

• Conversion of Littleton Community Based Outpatient Clinic to VA-run
Expanding Access: TeleHealth Program

- Specialty Services available in CBOCs via TeleHealth
- Available at all CBOCs, and some use in Veterans Home
- Over 5680 encounters in FY14 – 64% increase over FY13
- Continue to add new Specialty Services
- Over 600 WRJ Veterans Benefitted from Rehabilitation Services without having to Travel to the Medical Center
### Major Initiative

**Expanding Access: TeleHealth Program Offerings (continued)**

- Mental Health
- Podiatry
- Physical Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech Therapy
- Diabetes 1:1 Visits
- Nutrition 1:1 Visits
- Weight Loss Group
- Weight Loss Women’s Group
- Weight Loss 1:1
- Ear Nose and Throat
- Wound/Ostomy
- Neurology
- Nursing Preop
- Pain Management
- Audiology (Hearing Aid Mgmt)
- Cardiology
- Tele-Retinal Imaging
- Tele-Dermatology
Major Initiative

Focus on Health and Wellness

- Primary Care Provided through Interdisciplinary Teams
- Partnership between Veterans and Healthcare Team
- Health Coaching
- Integration of Diet and Exercise Programs
- Healthy lifestyle: Farm to Table Program
- Yoga, Mindfulness, Meditation available at the WRJ VAMC and some CBOCs
Major Initiative

Woman’s Health Program

- Comprehensive Women’s Care Center open October 2012
  - Designed and Built with Direct Input from Women Veterans Task Force

- Range of Services in Setting Designed for Women Veterans

- WRJ VA provides care for 1438 Women Veterans

- Working to increase number of Women Veterans

- Each Community Based Outpatient Clinic has a Women’s Health Provider
Major Initiative

Mental Health Program

- Mental Health Integrated into Primary Care
  - Same-Day Access to Psychiatrist/Psychologist
- Community Integration
- Expanding Mental Health Services at CBOCs
- Peer Support
- Use of Alternative Treatments: Mindfulness/Yoga
- Access to the Medical Center’s Specialized Coordination Team:
  - Suicide Prevention Coordinator
  - Justice Outreach Coordinator
  - Military Sexual Trauma Coordinator
Major Initiative

Mental Health – RRC Program

• 14-Bed Residential Recovery Program
• Plans to Expand
• Six week intensive Substance Abuse Treatment Program
• Over 255 graduates to date
  – 50 from New Hampshire
  – 34 from Massachusetts, Maine & New York
• Referral center for other VISN1 facilities
• Recidivism rate: < 20%
Eradicating Veteran Homelessness

- No ‘Wrong’ Door Approach - Community Integration
- White River Junction has Multiple Access Points
  - Stationed throughout Two-State Catchment Area – Medical Center & CBOCs
- 13 Dedicated Staff: 10 Social Workers, 2 Peer Counselors, and 1 Psychologist
- Strong Partnerships with State and Local Service Providers in VT & NH
- Over 1100 Veterans Served by WRJ Homeless Team in FY14
Full array of VA based housing interventions throughout our rural 2 state catchment area to include:

- 140 HUD/VASH permanent housing vouchers (140 granted/140 issued for FY2008-2013)
  - 24 additional vouchers granted in FY2014 with 13 being issued
- 5 Grant Per Diem voucher programs (66 Beds)
- 4 contracted shelters
- Emergency hotel voucher program
- National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (NCCHV)
- Veterans’ Justice Outreach Program (works with Veterans involved in the Criminal Justice System)

Close collaboration with community based housing resources to offer more resources for homeless Veterans to choose their options.
Major Initiative

Comprehensive Pain Management Program

• Program Goals:
  – Improve management of Veterans on high doses of Opioid Therapy
  – Reduce use of opioids where feasible
  – Provide alternative options for pain management

• Program Accomplishments:
  – Hired specialist in Pain Management
  – Developed special clinic for management of Veterans requiring Opioid Therapy
  – Expanded Pain Treatment Options to include interventional Pain Procedures (i.e. pain blocks)
  – Complimentary Alternative Medicine Options: acupuncture, yoga, mindfulness, meditation, aqua therapy
Major Initiative

Research & Educational Programs

- Strong Teaching and Research Missions
- $4.5M in Direct Grant Funding for FY14
- Northern New England Research Consortium (NNERC)
  - Consortium of 4 VA Rural Sites (Togus, Manchester, Northampton, & WRJ)
  - Enhance participation in collaborative research/clinical trials
    - Now Participate in the National Million Veteran Program (MVP)
- Closely Affiliated with the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth and University of Vermont Medical School
- Expanding services in Burlington CBOC with Support of UVM
WRJ VAMC New Programs

- Ophthalmology
- Sleep Study
- Mobile PET Scan
- General Dentistry
- Veterans with Hepatitis C
- Complex pulmonary services
- Multi-modality cardiovascular imaging
Increasing Acuity

- Expanding Programs:
  - Nephrology
    - Continuous Renal Replacement Therapy
    - Peritoneal/Home Dialysis
  - Outpatient Cardiovascular Care- Diagnostic Imaging
  - Additional Surgical Capabilities
    - Complex shoulder surgeries
    - Foot and Ankle Specialist
    - Additional General Surgeon brings new level of minimally-invasive laparoscopic surgery for example very complex gall bladders, colon removals, reflux procedures.
The VLER Health Program includes two primary types of health information exchange:

- **VLER Health Exchange** – allows VA providers and the non-VA partner providers to query and retrieve Veterans’ health information with each other’s organizations for treatment
  - Standards Based Exchange of relevant clinical information

- **VLER Health Direct** – allows VA users to send and receive specific information to non-VA partners (point to point) via secure email under a trusted Network

- Because most Veterans who receive VA care also receive non-VA care, there are significant opportunities to share health information
  - VLER Health Direct Secure Messaging is designed to be more secure and efficient than faxing, mailing or hand-carrying health information
  - Simply put, Direct is a **secure email-like service**
Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act Update
Veterans Choice Program
Veterans Access Choice and Accountability Act went into effect November 5, 2014.

Choice Program is **not** managed locally.

VA has contracted with a Third Party Administrator (TPA) to manage overall operations of the program: Includes mailing of cards, authorization for care and claims processing.

The TPA for New England States is Health Net Federal Services.

Approximately 9M Eligible Veterans will or have received a Veterans Choice Card by the end of February 15, 2015.

**Veterans can still choose to receive their care from the VA**

In order to be eligible to receive a Choice Card the Veteran must:

- Have been enrolled by August 1, 2014, **or**
- Have served in a theater of combat operation, and applied within 5 years of deployment.
Veterans must meet one of two criteria to use the card - either geographic residence or 30 day wait times

- **Based on Wait Time**
  - Has a scheduled appointment, with a VA healthcare provider and is unable to receive an appointment within 30 days of the date that an appointment is deemed clinically appropriate by a VA health care provider

- **Based on Geographic Distance**
  - Reside more than 40 miles from the closest VA facility or
  - Reside in a state without a full-service VA medical facility that provides hospital care emergency services and surgical care and reside, MORE than 20 miles from such a facility.
Use of Veterans Choice Card
(eligibility requirements)

- Choice program covers hospital care and medical services under the Medical Benefits Package, which includes pharmacy and beneficiary travel.

- Eligible Veterans are authorized for a course of treatment, which must be considered medically necessary, for up to 60 days. The treatment will include any follow-up appointments, as well as any ancillary and specialty services.

- To be eligible, all Veterans are covered by other health insurance (OHI) must provide that information upon request for care under the Choice Program.

- Eligible Veterans are responsible for any copayments, deductibles or cost shares as required by their other health insurance.

- White River Junction Veterans Choice Care Champions
  - Camille Olmstead – Business Office Manager
  - Wendy Decoff – Associate Chief of the Business Office