

VA Celebrates 75 Years of Health Care Innovation and Research Achievement

This year, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will commemorate the 75th anniversary and establishment of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Starting in 1946 as the Department of Medicine & Surgery to care for Veterans returning from World War II, VHA has evolved to meet the unique challenges and care needs of Veterans from every era and at every stage of their lives. VA is honored to share in VHA's 75-year legacy and looks forward to serving Veterans for the next 75 years and beyond.

VHA also trains, as part of General Omar Bradley's historical VA vision, doctors and clinicians at major medical university locations within close proximity to VHA medical centers. Approximately 70% of all doctors in the U.S. will continue to complete residency or other collaborative training rotations through VHA. To the benefit of all citizens, the valuable skills, experiences, and knowledge they will learn from VHA will be implemented in all hospitals and clinics across the country.

As the first electronically integrated health care system in the world, VHA continues to lead



A Legacy of Service. The Future of Care.

the nation in Telehealth services. Nationally, 1,556,000 Veterans used our Telehealth system in 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and guidelines to limit physical contact with patients, usage almost doubled from 2019. VA Western New York Healthcare System (VA WNYHS) went from 4,612 Veterans using Telehealth in 2019 to 7,126 in 2020, and just through the first quarter of 2021, has already seen 4,913 Veterans. Paul Galantowicz, VAWNYHS Facility Telehealth Coordinator, added that "in 1992, VA WNYHS, in cooperation with the University at Buffalo, established the first Positron Emission Tomography (PET) imaging center in WNY, providing more research capability into neurology, cardiology and oncology diseases."

Drs. Andrew Gage and William Chardack along with local medical device inventors



New General Electric \$4.5 million state of the art PET/CT Scanner



Veteran Tasker Crews, center, after receiving the 10,000th COVID-19 vaccination

like Mr. Wilson Greatbatch can claim major medical device research, innovation, and product development credit with the world's first implantable internal heart pacemaker in the late 1950s. Additionally, VA WNYHS can proudly claim the formulation, funding, and actual creation of one of the first women's clinics in the nation in the early 1990s. Today, over 6000 Western New York women use the Women Veterans Program.

More recently, Bruce R. Troen, MD and Kenneth L. Seldeen, PhD have spearheaded a series of

investigations from the "benchtop to the bedside" that seek to understand and develop strategies to help Veterans age successfully. Drs. Troen and Seldeen have been funded by VA to conduct research on the role that vitamin D and a vitamin B component (nicotinamide riboside - NR) play in maintaining and perhaps even enhancing functional capacity in older mice and older Veterans. Additional research team members include Dr. Jeffrey Mador, Dr. Nikhil Satchidanand, Mr. Yonas Redae, and Ms. Ayesha

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COVID-19 vaccination tent

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Rahman. These researchers will be starting a major 4-year clinical trial this spring to examine the benefits of NR in older Veterans (ClinicalTrials.gov - NCT04691986). They welcome the participation and enrollment of both male and female Veterans age 65 and older. Enrolled Veterans of VA WNYHS interested in participating in these studies can call Ms. Ayesha Rahman at 716-862-8944.

Neurologically speaking, Dr. Feng and his team are investigating the ability to generate different types of neurons from human skin cells. These neurons, converted from patient cells, possess the key to unlock the biochemical pathways responsible for Parkinson's disease and other

brain disorders. These transformed cells are highly valuable for testing new therapies to overcome Parkinson Disease. Their efforts have included lab studies that have laid the foundation for human clinical trials.

For combat related injuries that affect eyesight, understanding the mechanism of blast-induced visual dysfunction and progressive vision loss is important. A team of researchers led by Dr. Steven J. Fliesler (VA WNYHS) and Dr. Machel T. Pardue (Atlanta VA Medical Center) has been studying the cellular and molecular events that ensue following exposure of deeply anesthetized rats to an acoustic shock wave that simulates the blast overpressure emanating from IEDs, or Improvised Explosive Devices. They are investigating some novel, proprietary drugs that may reduce or even prevent the visual system damage and dysfunction. The results of their initial study have been published Eye Study.



Robust Telehealth Medicine capabilities across many specialties

Finally, because proper sleep is an essential component of overall good health, clinical investigations on sleep disorders in Veterans with PTSD over the last decade have identified new approaches for screening and treatment of insomnia and

nightmares among Veterans. Dr. El-Solh and his team have developed an AI-predictive tool to identify Veterans who are likely to have sleep apnea. Overseen by Dr. Sethi and Dr. Murphy, VA Western New York Healthcare System has the largest repository of samples obtained from Veterans with COPD.

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VETERANS: To determine your eligibility for VA health care enrollment, please call 1-716-862-8829 in the Greater Buffalo area or 1-585-297-1053/54 in the Batavia area.