

Veterans'

THE WELLNESS MAGAZINE
FOR OHIO VETERANS

Health

S U M M E R • 2 0 0 2

Home away
from home

Faster service
for veterans

A new level of care
Expanded unit helps patients
overcome spinal injury

VA Healthcare
System of Ohio



Advances that benefit you

It is an important goal for people to get the most out of life. Here at VISN 10, our goal is to help you get the most out of life by helping you get the most out of your healthcare. This is something we have always tried to do and continue to do.

With that in mind, our programs and services were created so you can receive the best care. We are also changing the way we provide that care. New plans are under way to reduce waiting times at outpatient clinics. Look to page 3 for some of these changes that will make a difference in your health.

A key to getting and staying healthy is the support of family and friends. Our hospitality houses ensure patients get that support.

These programs provide a comfortable place for family to stay near their hospitalized loved ones and the medical center. They also make it easier for veterans who have to travel long distances to receive needed care. In fact, a new facility, the Fisher House, recently opened in Cincinnati. To learn more, turn to page 4.

On page 6, read about new services for patients with spinal cord injuries. An improved spinal cord injury unit in Cleveland has a dedicated staff trained to meet the special needs of these veterans.

We are constantly looking for ways to better serve you. If at any time you have any questions, let us know.



—Clyde Parkis, Network Director



About our mailing list

We make every effort to ensure our mailing lists are accurate. If you have questions or would like to be added or deleted to the list, let us know. To help serve you better, we need to know your entire address. If you receive *Veterans' Health*, the easiest way is to clip the mailing panel and send it to us at:

Veterans' Health

VA Healthcare System of Ohio
11500 Northlake Drive, Suite 200
Cincinnati, OH 45249

Ensuring care for all

Over the past few years, medical costs have skyrocketed. That puts a drain on VA's ability to provide the care you deserve. Now, with the Medical Care Cost Recovery Fund, VA has an additional resource.

The fund consists of co-payments made by nonservice-connected veterans and payments made by their private insurance carriers. New regulations guarantee those payments go back to the facility where the care was received.

"Each facility benefits from the collections it makes," says Charellitta Littlejohn, chief of Patient Business Services at the Cincinnati campus. "With the funds, we have been able to purchase additional equipment as needed and support programs in the medical center."

Littlejohn stresses that eligibility for VA medical care is not affected by a veteran's medical insurance status. And only veterans in certain priority groups are required to make a co-payment. However, the fund benefits everyone.

"It helps us to be able to provide care to all priority groups of veterans," Littlejohn says.

Veterans' Health is published quarterly as a patient education service by VA Healthcare System of Ohio, one of the 22 integrated networks of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The publication is intended to provide information to help you stay well, manage your healthcare and learn about the many health services available through the VA. This publication is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, which should be obtained from your doctor. All articles may be reproduced for educational purposes.

The Mission of the VA Healthcare System of Ohio is:

- To provide veterans a continuum of care that is accessible, value-added and cost-effective, and of the highest quality, within an environment of outstanding education and research.
- To promote a culture that supports and develops a caring, compassionate, competent and quality-oriented workforce.

Veterans' Health Editorial Directors

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Cincinnati VA Campus

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Chillicothe VA Campus

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VA Healthcare System of Ohio



Faster service for veterans

Thousands of Ohio veterans turn to VA for healthcare each year. In the past, this demand often resulted in waits for specialty care. What's more, recently liberalized eligibility rules, as well as VA's prescription drug benefits, put added strain on the system, according to Sheila C. Gelman, M.D., chief medical officer for VISN 10.

Currently, healthcare teams are working together to shorten the long waits. Working with the Boston-based Institute for Healthcare Improvement as part of a national project, VISN 10 is testing strategies in an attempt to cut delays in both primary and specialty care to fewer than 30 days. Here's how some of these steps will streamline our healthcare delivery.

Shorter trips

In addition to its five medical center sites, nursing homes and resident care facilities, VISN 10 now has more than 20 new community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs). These CBOCs are located in areas where more veterans live in Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky. This eliminates long drives and the expenses involved in having veterans travel to busy big-city clinics.

Help from all sides

"We've also identified key changes being tested by providers and staff in our clinics," Dr. Gelman says. "Patients will be linked more closely with a primary care provider. What's more, providers will have the authority to manage their patients and be accountable for outcomes, including timeliness of service."

Specialists' referrals are also being streamlined. New guidelines for primary care doctors will help ensure that necessary information gets to the specialist's office before the patient arrives. That includes paperwork, images, test results and other vital information. The information will be sent directly by computer.

Veterans need to do their part, too, by keeping appointments, being on time and calling ahead if they must reschedule.

"No-show rates are as high as 40 percent in some locations," Dr. Gelman says.

A campaign of announcements, posters and "friendly reminder" phone calls to the patients' homes have begun lowering the absentee rate.

With these changes under way, Dr. Gelman says, veterans should notice real improvements.

"Everyone will benefit, including veterans and staff," she says. **VH**

Home away from home



Imagine that you are seriously injured and in the hospital. Naturally, you want your loved ones near you for support. In the past, that might have meant family members sleeping on chairs by your bed or staying overnight in the waiting room.

Veterans and their families now have a better option with the Fisher House at the Cincinnati campus. Opened last October, the guest house provides patients and families a temporary home away from home.

Having loved ones nearby has been shown to make a positive difference in

patients' recoveries. Making that task easier is the goal of the Fisher House. The guest house offers a haven for patients and families where they can find support and comfort during difficult times.



VA guest houses allow families to stay close together during difficult times.



Easing the burden

The Fisher House also provides a place to stay for patients who must travel a long way to Cincinnati for care. Although VISN 10 has 23 community-based outpatient clinics, sometimes patients need to go to the medical center for treatment. It can be hard for some to make the trip to Cincinnati for appointments.

The Fisher House eases this burden by

VA is here for you

If you have any question or concern about your healthcare, we're ready to answer it. And to make it easier for you, we've included these cards with important phone numbers. Simply clip the card for your VA campus and keep it someplace handy—on the fridge, by the phone, in an appointment book. That way you'll have the information you need to get the care you deserve.

BRECKSVILLE

Brecksville VA Campus
10000 Brecksville Road
Brecksville, OH 44141
440-526-3030



Prescription and
appointment questions
1-800-379-8387 (1-800-379-VETS)

Enrollment/eligibility
440-526-3030, ext. 7338 or 6817

Tele-Nurse
1-888-VET-OHIO
(1-888-838-6446)



CHILLICOTHE

Chillicothe VA Campus
17273 State Route 104
Chillicothe, OH 45601
740-773-1141

Scheduling appointments

Primary Care Teams
Blue 740-772-7190
Brown 740-772-7121
Green 740-772-7191
Red 740-772-7149
Gold 740-772-7150

Eligibility/admissions
740-773-1141, ext. 7017 or 7772



CINCINNATI

Cincinnati VA Campus
3200 Vine Street
Cincinnati, OH 45220
513-861-3100



Scheduling appointments

Prime Team 513-475-6496
Green Team 513-475-6549
Red Team 513-475-6570
Blue Team 513-475-6562
Yellow Team 513-475-6559
Medical Specialty Team 513-475-6558

Eligibility/enrollment
513-475-6499



Community-based outpatient clinics

Akron VA Campus
330-344-4177

Mansfield VA Campus
419-529-4602

Ravenna VA Campus
330-296-3641

Canton VA Campus
330-489-4600

McCafferty VA Campus
216-939-0699

Sandusky VA Campus
419-625-7350

East Liverpool VA Campus
330-386-4303

New Philadelphia VA Campus
330-602-5339

Warren VA Campus
330-392-0311

Lorain VA Campus
440-244-3833/3852

Painesville VA Campus
440-357-6740

Youngstown VA Campus
330-740-9200



Medication refills

(available 24 hours a day by touch-tone phone)
740-772-7118 or 1-800-358-8262, ext. 7118

Scheduling appointments

740-773-1141, ext. 7018, or 1-800-358-8262

Tele-Nurse

1-888-VET-OHIO (1-888-838-6446)
For local calls, dial 740-772-7034,
Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

Community-based outpatient clinics

Athens VA Campus
740-593-7314

Lancaster VA Campus
740-653-6145

Portsmouth VA Campus
740-353-3236

Marietta VA Campus
Call 1-800-358-8262 for an appointment.

Hillsboro VA Campus
Call 1-800-358-8262 for an appointment.



Medicine refills

513-487-6606 or 1-888-267-7873

Tele-Nurse

1-888-VET-OHIO (1-888-838-6446)
For local calls, dial 513-475-6490.

Community-based outpatient clinics

Bellevue VA Campus
859-392-3840

Clermont County VA Campus
513-943-3680

Lawrenceburg VA Campus
812-539-2313





COLUMBUS

Columbus VA Campus
543 Taylor Avenue
Columbus, OH 43203
614-257-5200 or
1-888-615-9448

Scheduling appointments
614-257-5618

Eligibility/enrollment
614-257-5607 or 614-257-5608

Medication refills
614-257-5711



DAYTON

Dayton VA Campus
4100 West Third Street
Dayton, OH 45428
937-268-6511 or
1-800-368-8262

Scheduling appointments
Primary Care Teams
Blue Team 937-267-5369
Red Team 937-267-5371
Orange Team 937-267-5323
Green Team 937-267-5324

Eligibility/enrollment
937-268-6511 or
1-800-368-8262



WADE PARK

Wade Park VA Campus
10701 East Blvd.
Cleveland, OH 44106
216-791-3800

**Prescription and
appointment questions**
1-800-379-8387 (1-800-379-VETS)

Enrollment/eligibility
216-791-3800, ext. 5572 or 5590

Tele-Nurse
1-888-VET-OHIO (1-888-838-6446)





Tele-Nurse

1-888-VET-OHIO (1-888-838-6446)

Community-based outpatient clinics

Grove City VA Campus
614-257-5800



Zanesville VA Campus
740-453-7725

Medication refills

937-267-5325 or 1-800-368-8262

Tele-Nurse

1-888-VET-OHIO
(1-888-838-6446)



Community-based outpatient clinics

Lima VA Campus
419-221-1893

Middletown
VA Campus
513-423-8387

Springfield
VA Campus
937-328-3385

Richmond, IN
VA Campus
765-973-6915

Community-based outpatient clinics

Akron VA Campus
330-344-4177

Canton VA Campus
330-489-4600

East Liverpool VA Campus
330-386-4303

Lorain VA Campus
440-244-3833/3852

Mansfield VA Campus
419-529-4602

McCafferty VA Campus
216-939-0699

New Philadelphia
VA Campus
330-602-5339

Painesville VA Campus
440-357-6740

Ravenna VA Campus
330-296-3641

Sandusky VA Campus
419-625-7350

Warren VA Campus
330-392-0311

Youngstown VA Campus
330-740-9200





Miss America 2000, Heather French, stops to have her picture taken with the Color Guard from AMVETS Post 41.



Many distinguished guests from the community, Fisher Foundation and VA Central Office participated in the grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony held in front of the beautiful new Fisher House in Cincinnati.

providing them with a place to stay overnight. That way, patients don't have to leave extra early for a morning appointment. Instead, they can stay at the Fisher House the night before.

Full of amenities

With 16 rooms, the guest house can accommodate 32 people. Four of those rooms are fully handicapped accessible. A kitchen and dining room allow guests to prepare meals. They also have access to laundry facilities.

The Fisher House in Cincinnati is one of only five in the VA. Last year, all these houses served about 1,450 families who stayed an average of 10 days.

For more information on the Fisher House, please call 513-475-6517. **VH**

A place to stay in a time of need

Veterans throughout VISN 10 can benefit from hospitality houses if they need care at a VA medical center. These facilities, whether a separate house or rooms in the hospital, provide patients and families a place to stay while receiving treatment. In addition to the new Fisher House in Cincinnati, services are available at other medical centers.

In Cleveland and Brecksville, the Hoptel program features several rooms at the medical centers. Cleveland has 13 beds; Brecksville, eight. There is no fee for the stay, and veterans' meals are free.

"These are safe, comfortable places for people who come a far distance to stay," says Joseph Aquilina, manager of geriatrics and extended care and chief social worker at the Cleveland campus.

Aquilina says the Hoptel has also made a difference for the medical center. The facility makes it easier to schedule same-day surgeries and other outpatient procedures. That's because it is less difficult for patients to travel to the medical center for their care.

The Hoptel in Chillicothe provides seven rooms in the medical center for overnight stays. There is no cost to the veterans.

"Guests love being close to their family," says Debbie Crabtree, R.N., patient education coordinator at the Chillicothe campus. "It is convenient and helps patients and families feel more relaxed."

Crabtree says most stays last only a couple days but can be longer depending on the individual's needs.

In Dayton, the medical center works with the Veterans of Foreign Wars to offer the Hospitality House. For a small fee, guests can stay in the house, which is conveniently located near the hospital.

For more information, contact:

- Brecksville: 216-526-3030, ext. 7214
- Cleveland: 216-791-3800, ext. 4262
- Chillicothe: 740-773-7771
- Dayton: 937-268-6511, ext. 1022 or ext. 294

You may also log onto the Dayton website at www.dayton.med.va.gov/pdf/brochures/hospouse.pdf

A new level of care

Expanded unit helps patients overcome spinal cord injury

An injury to the spinal cord is, without a doubt, a scary event. But patients can rest assured they are receiving excellent care with the newly expanded Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Unit at the Cleveland campus.

In place for more than a year, the new unit now occupies the sixth floor of the medical center. For patients and staff, it creates an improved environment of care.

“Because everything is on one floor, it is easier for patients to get to and from therapy. This helps them maintain their independence,” says Robert Ruff,

M.D., Ph.D., acting chief of the SCI Unit and co-director of the rehabilitation, SCI and dysfunction care line.

An expanded resource

The unit has 32 inpatient beds and offers a wide range of therapies, including physical, occupational and recreational. Patients may also receive speech therapy, driver training and computer training. The goal is always to help people become as independent as possible.

“The unit enables us to concentrate resources that are in short supply but important to have accessible,” Dr. Ruff says.

Not only does that include the therapy programs but also the staff who coordinates them. The unit’s specialized staff includes nurses trained to recognize the unique needs of SCI patients. The doctors are certified in spinal cord medicine. Many specialists, including urologists and plastic surgeons, are brought together to provide total care.

“We have the experience to recognize problems that occur commonly in SCI patients but not in others,” Dr. Ruff says.

Wheelchair Games come to Ohio

This July 9–13, the Cleveland campus will host the 22nd National Veterans Wheelchair Games. More than 500 athletes will compete in events such as swimming, weight-lifting, wheelchair slalom and more. The event is the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world. For more information or to volunteer, call 216-791-3800, ext. 6700.

Patients benefit

Vivian Thornton, R.N., head nurse of the unit, says this specialized effort doesn’t go unnoticed.

“Patients feel comfortable and safe with us,” she says. “Our nursing staff knows the special problems they face and can treat them.”

Even those who are not near the Cleveland unit

Dip into aquatherapy

Sometimes injuries can make traditional therapy and exercise difficult. The added pressure on already aching bodies may be too much. Aquatherapy offers an alternative. By taking therapy into the water, patients benefit.

Water takes a burden off bones by supporting body weight. In waist-high water, people carry only about half their actual weight; in neck-high water, only 10 percent. Yet unlike air, water provides resistance in any direction people move, maximizing effort.

"Patients are able to do things in the pool they can't do on land," says Lee Ann Morris, a registered kinesiotherapist at the Chillicothe campus. And therapists are able to increase the intensity of exercise simply by gradually moving the patient into shallower water.

Morris says one of the best things about water therapy is its diversity. Almost any kind of exercise can be done in the water. Morris recommends following aquatherapy for four to six weeks.

"Patients report less pain and increases in strength they didn't think were possible," Morris says.

can benefit. The SCI support clinic program allows patients to receive care at facilities close to home. When needed, they are referred to the SCI Unit in Cleveland for treatment.

Once at the unit, patients will notice a number of improvements that have come with the new site. The rooms are larger and designed to accommodate needed equipment. Special showers and baths make it easier for patients to bathe themselves. Faucets have motion sensors, and the water temperature is controlled so it doesn't get too hot or cold.

"The bright environment has a positive effect on patients and staff," Dr. Ruff says. "Patients feel they are in a first-class unit, which they deserve."

For more information on the SCI Unit, call 216-791-3800, ext. 4249, or toll free 1-800-838-6446. 

Best ways to get moving



Exercise is easier said than done for many people. To get motivated—and help keep your commitment to exercise—try these tips:

- Set measurable and attainable goals, such as "I'm going to exercise three times a week."
- Don't make weight loss a goal. The results can be discouraging!
- Make plans stick by writing them down and telling someone about them.
- When you reach a fitness goal, buy something new, like a piece of clothing or equipment for your favorite recreation.
- Find a fitness buddy. You can encourage each other on days when exercise feels like a chore.

Can't seem to find a block of time to devote to working out? Here are some easy ways to fit more activity into your daily schedule:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park at least a two-minute walk from the office.
- Walk around the entire mall before stopping at the store of interest.
- Play tag or catch with your kids.
- Devote a morning to vigorous house-cleaning. Mop, wash windows, vacuum under the furniture—not around it!
- Schedule six 5-minute walking breaks throughout the day.
- Do leg lifts and arm curls without leaving your desk.
- Make working out a priority with its own time slot in your day. But don't set your alarm clock for 5 a.m. if you're not an early riser.
- Make exercise inescapable. Put your workout clothes in plain sight. Block your view of the television with exercise equipment.

Reaching Us Is Easy

Keep this information handy—when you need us, we'll be there.

MEDICAL CENTERS

Brecksville VA Campus

10000 Brecksville Road
Brecksville, OH 44141
216-526-3030

Chillicothe VA Campus

17273 State Route 104
Chillicothe, OH 45601
740-773-1141

Cincinnati VA Campus

3200 Vine Street
Cincinnati, OH 45220
513-861-3100

Dayton VA Campus

4100 West Third Street
Dayton, OH 45428
937-268-6511

Ft. Thomas VA Campus

1000 So. Ft. Thomas Avenue
Ft. Thomas, KY 41075
606-572-6202

Louis Stokes VA Campus

10701 East Boulevard
Cleveland, OH 44106
216-791-3800

INDEPENDENT OUTPATIENT CLINIC

Columbus VA Campus

543 Taylor Avenue
Columbus, OH 43203
614-257-5200

COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT CLINICS

Akron VA Campus

676 South Broadway Street
Suite 203
Akron, OH 44311
330-344-4177

Athens VA Campus

510 West Union Street
Athens, OH 45701
740-593-7314

Bellevue VA Campus

103 Landmark Drive
Bellevue, KY 41073
859-392-3840

Canton VA Campus

221 3rd Street SE
Canton, OH 44702
330-489-4660

Clermont County VA Campus

Eastgate Professional
Office Park
4355 Ferguson Drive, Suite 270
Cincinnati, OH 45245
513-943-3680

Dearborn Co. VA Campus

710 W. Eads Parkway
Lawrenceburg, IN 47025
812-539-2313

East Liverpool VA Campus

332 West 6th Street
East Liverpool, OH 43920
330-386-4303

Grove City VA Campus

1953 Ohio Avenue
Grove City, OH 43123
614-257-5800

Lancaster VA Campus

1550 Sheridan Drive, Suite 100
Colonnade Medical Building
Lancaster, OH 43130
740-653-6145

Lima VA Campus

1220 E. Elm St., Suite 110
Lima, OH 45804
419-227-9676

Lorain VA Campus

205 West 20th Street
Lorain, OH 44052
440-244-3833

Mansfield VA Campus

1456 Park Avenue West
Mansfield, OH 44906
419-529-4602

Marietta VA Campus

418 Colegate Drive
Marietta, OH 45750
740-568-0412

McCafferty VA Campus

4242 Lorain Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44113
216-939-0699

Middletown VA Campus

675 North University Blvd.
Middletown, OH 45042
513-423-8387

Painesville VA Campus

W 7 Jackson Street
Painesville, OH 44077
440-357-6740

Portsmouth VA Campus

621 Broadway Street
Portsmouth, OH 45662
740-353-3236

Richmond VA Campus

4351 South A Street
Richmond, IN 47374
765-973-6915

Sandusky VA Campus

3416 Columbus Avenue
Sandusky, OH 44870
419-625-7350

Springfield VA Campus

512 South Burnett Road
Springfield, OH 45505
937-328-3385

Warren VA Campus

Riverside Square
1400 Tod Avenue NW
Warren, OH 44485
330-392-0311

Youngstown VA Campus

2031 Belmont Avenue
Youngstown, OH 44505
330-740-9200

Zanesville VA Campus

840 Bethesda Drive
Building 3A
Zanesville, OH 43701
740-453-7725

Call Tele-Nurse at 1-888-838-6446. • Visit us online at: www.va.gov/visn10/

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