

Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center 2012 Annual Report

Focused on Excellence - Putting Veterans First



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Message from the Director

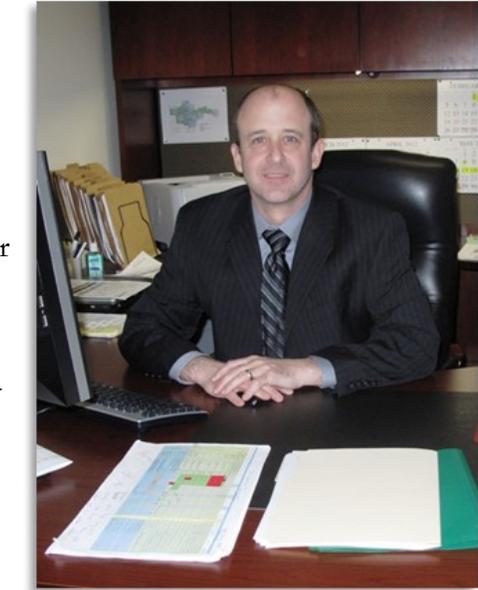
I am pleased to present you with our 2012 Annual Report for the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center (OGJVAMC). Our motto, *Focused on Excellence – Putting Veterans First*, reflects our goal to be the health care of choice for Veterans and recognized as a leader in rural health.

This past year we made significant achievements, thanks to our most valuable resource - our dedicated employees and volunteers. OGJVAMC once again was named Top Performer on Key Quality Measures™ by The Joint Commission and one of only 244 hospitals nationwide earning this distinction for a second consecutive year. We also achieved accreditation from The Joint Commission, CARF International, and American College of Pathologists.

This last year, we began strategically planning to improve upon OGJVAMC's leadership in VA rural health care. We revised our Mission and Vision statements to better reflect the organization, and building upon the foundation of VA's Core Values of I CARE, we developed a set of guiding principles - *People, Quality, Service Experience, Partnerships, and Stewardship*. This will guide us in achieving our goal of providing our Veterans with personalized, proactive and patient-driven health care.

As you read this report, you will notice that we continue to make strides in ensuring our Veterans receive the very best care. We are increasing access through our Veterans Transportation Service and various partnerships. We are bringing VA health care closer to Veterans' homes by significantly expanding the number of clinics using telehealth technology, and keeping Veterans in their homes longer with expanded Home and Community Based Care programs. We continue to reach out to Veterans through our OEF/OIF/OND and Veteran homeless programs as well as our innovative Peer Led Peer Support Recovery Groups. We have expanded our hospice and palliative care programs in both home based settings and in our Community Living Center. Finally, it is the little extra touches that clearly communicate to Veterans and their families that we care about them, like our Butterfly Wish Program. There is much more highlighted in the following pages.

We look forward to 2013 as we continue to *Focus on Excellence and Putting Veterans First*.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Rice".

James W. Rice
Medical Center Director

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Hancock, MI



Ironwood, MI



Manistique, MI



Marquette, MI



Menominee, MI



Rhinelander, WI



Sault Ste Marie, MI



Mission, Vision and a Log Cabin

Mission:

Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional healthcare that improves their health and well-being.

Vision:

Leaders in Rural Healthcare - Focused on Excellence - Putting Veterans First.

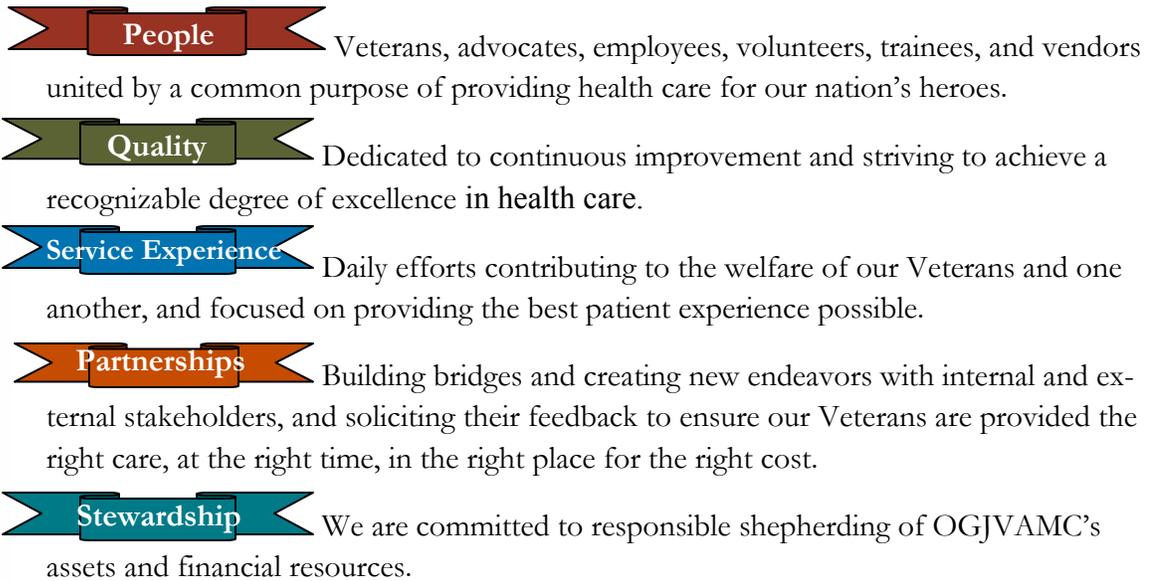
Motto:

Focused on Excellence - Putting Veterans First.

OGJVAMC's leadership, staff, and organizational stakeholders convened at three retreats to outline a strategic plan. This plan is critical to navigating the organization forward, and ensuring that OGJVAMC remains a leader in rural health care, and a provider and employer of choice.

The retreats resulted in the development of a strategic framework, whereby OGJVAMC's Mission and Vision statements were reviewed and revised to better reflect the organization. Also, to best illustrate OGJVAMC's strategic plan, a log

cabin was "built." The *foundation* of OGJVAMC's log cabin is the VA Core Values (I CARE – Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence). These core values, i.e., "who we are," are the base elements of how we go about our work, how we interact with each other, and which strategies we employ to fulfill our mission. Most importantly, they are the principles we use every day in everything we do. The *columns* of the log cabin are OGJVAMC's guiding principles, the main strategic direction to achieve the mission and realize the vision. These are:

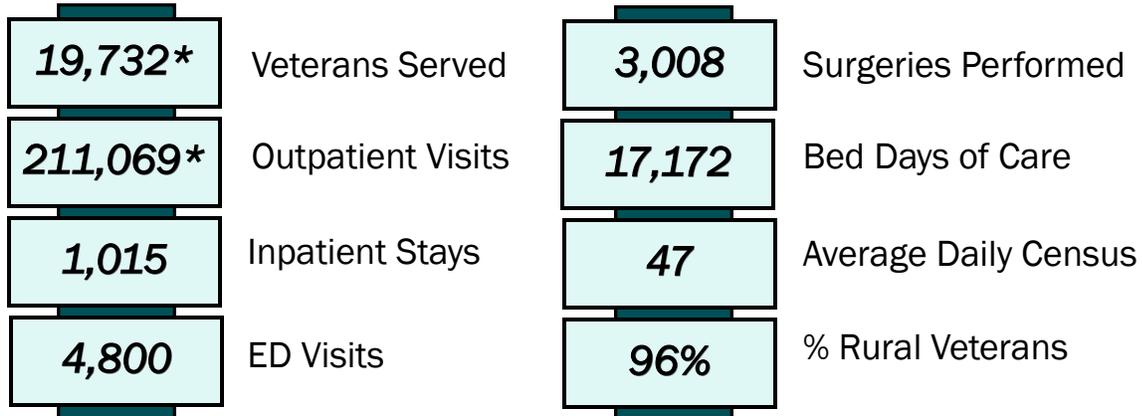


Moving forward, when we consider a new initiative or innovation we will ask ourselves how does that idea fit within our mission, vision and strategic plan.



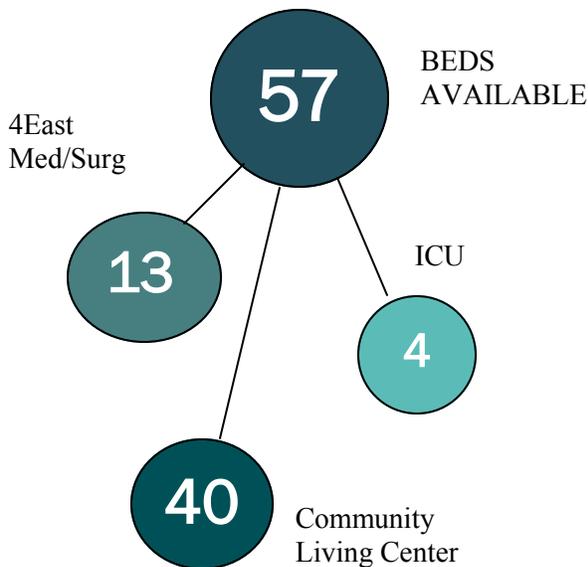
OGJVAMC at a Glance

Clinical Statistics



* Includes Community Outpatient/Rural Outreach Clinics

Operating Beds



Staffing

- ★ 658 Employees
- ★ 32% Veteran Employees
- ★ 608 Volunteers
- ★ 62 Licensed Physicians
- ★ 164 Nurses
- ★ 55 Mental Health Professionals

Geographic Area



FY 2012 Budget

- \$126M Operating Budget
- \$8.3M Construction Funds
- \$2.56M Rural Health Funds

People: Our Most Valuable Resource

The honors and accreditations noted on page 8 as well as the patient satisfaction scores on page 9 would not be possible without our most valuable resource – **people**. These honors and achievements are a testament to OGJVAMC employees – from housekeeper to clinical provider - and volunteers for their commitment to Veterans and fulfilling our motto,

"Focused on Excellence - Putting Veterans First." In addition, OGJVAMC continues to pursue opportunities to prepare the next generation of VA employees and leaders through VA's LEAD leadership program for current employees, intern opportunities for college students and career fairs for local high school students (*story page 25*).



These honors and achievements are a testament to OGJVAMC employees – from housekeeper to clinical provider - and volunteers and their commitment to Veterans...

Volunteers Answering the Call

In FY2012, more than **608 VOLUNTEERS** provided **44,503 HOURS OF SERVICE** to help achieve the mission at OGJVAMC. This represents **\$969,720 IN LABOR** or the equivalent of **21.4 FULL TIME EMPLOYEES**,

In addition, OGJVAMC received **\$160,808 IN MONETARY AND MATERIAL DONATIONS** that benefit the Veterans served at OGJVAMC and its community based clinics.



VA Employees Helping the Community

Feds Feed Families



1,472 pounds of food & household items collected and delivered to local food pantries

Adopt-a-Family



Gifts donated & delivered to **3 families and 2 charitable organizations**.

CFC



Raised **\$35,759** for the 2012 Combined Federal Campaign to help people in the community.

OGJVAMC Services Recognized



The Joint Commission Top Performer

OGJVAMC is one of 620 U.S. hospitals - representing the top 18 percent of Joint Commission-accredited hospitals – earning the distinction of Top Performers on Key Quality Measures™. Only 19 other VA medical facilities were recognized. It is also one of only 244 hospitals receiving this recognition for a second year in a row.



VA Thomson-Reuters Value Model

OGJVAMC has consistently scored at the top of the Thomson-Reuters Value Model each quarter, ending Fiscal Year 2012 with 5 stars in quality and 4 stars in efficiency.



Accreditation from The Joint Commission

OGJVAMC received accreditation from The Joint Commission for the Hospital, Home Care Program, Behavioral Health Care Program, and Long Term Care Program. The Joint Commission is the leading accreditor of health care organizations in America.



Accreditation from CARF International

OGJVAMC's Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Program received accreditation from CARF International, an independent nonprofit organization that accredits specialized services. The CARF inspection and survey made no recommendations, which is an extraordinary achievement as only three percent of CARF surveys result in no recommendations.



Accreditation from College of American Pathologists

OGJVAMC's Pathology and Laboratory Service received accreditation from the College of American Pathologists (CAP), and is now one of more than 7,000 CAP-accredited facilities worldwide. The U.S. federal government recognizes the CAP Laboratory Accreditation Program as being equal to or more stringent than the government's own inspection program.



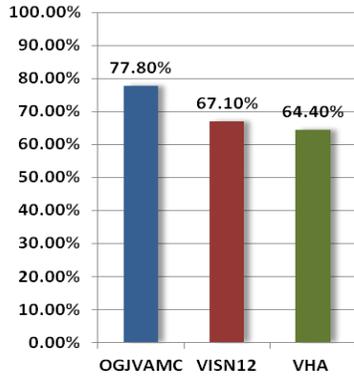
Initiatives Selected as Strong Practices

OGJVAMC's innovative *Evidence Based Psychotherapy via Telemental Health Program* and *Circle of Care Clinic* were selected by the VA Office of Mental Health as "Strong Practices" in the VA. OGJVAMC's Evidence Based Psychotherapy via Telemental Health Program was selected as a Strong Practice for 3 categories: PTSD, Military Sexual Trauma, and Evidence Based Treatment. The Circle of Care Clinic was also selected for 3 categories: Transformation to Recovery-Oriented Care, Integrated Care Service, and Evidence Based Treatment.

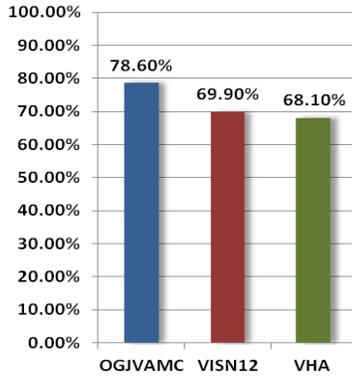
Patient Satisfaction

Overall Rating of OGJVAMC

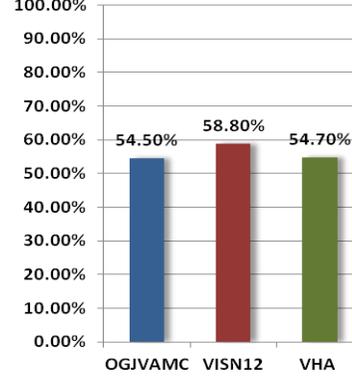
Inpatient:
Overall rating of hospital



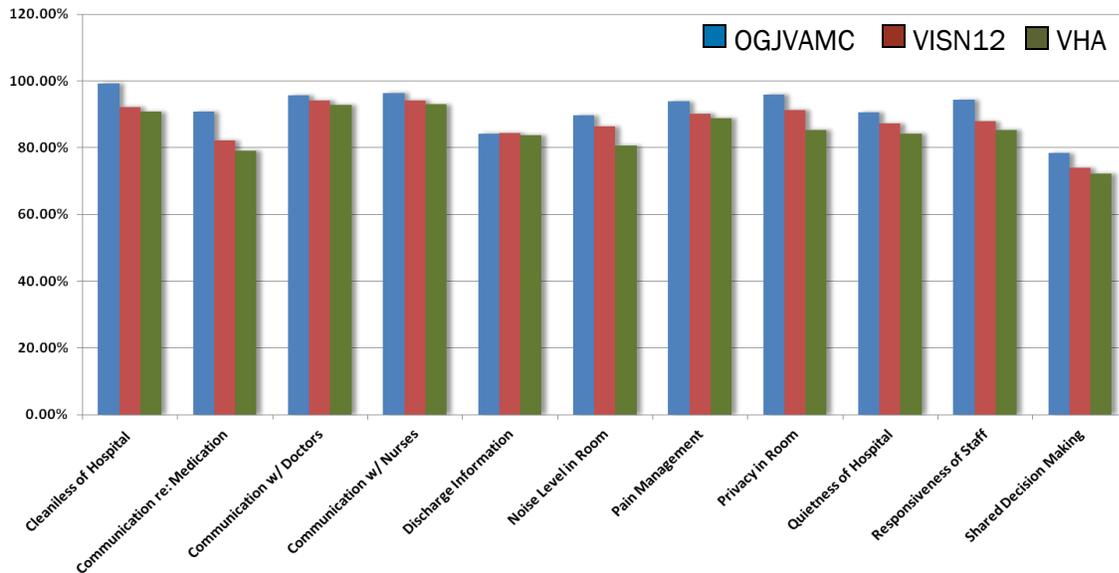
Inpatient:
Willing to recommend hospital



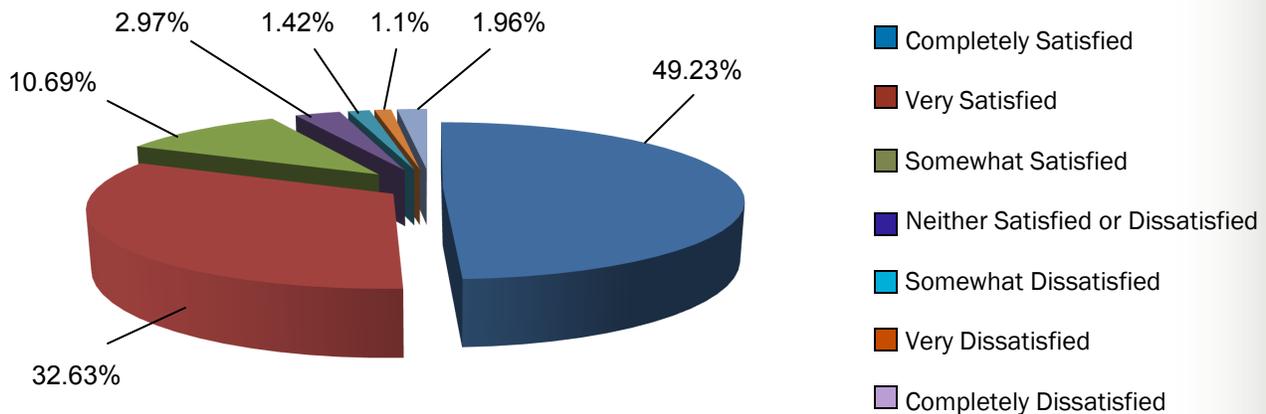
Outpatient:
Overall rating of hospital



Inpatient Satisfaction Scores—All Dimensions of Care



Overall Outpatient Satisfaction



PACT: Patient Aligned Care Teams

OGJVAMC has transformed how it delivers care to its Veterans. In 2010, OGJVAMC began implementing the VA’s Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) Model to provide more patient centric care. By mid 2011, the reorganization was complete with seven PACT teamlets at OGJVAMC and between 1-3 teamlets at each of its Outpatient Clinics and Rural Outreach Clinic.

PACT is Team Based Care: The Veteran works with a core team of health care professionals, known as a teamlet, which includes his or her physician, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, and administrative clerk. A social worker, pharmacist, dietician and mental health professional may also be on the team. These health care professionals

work together as a team to provide comprehensive care for each Veteran.

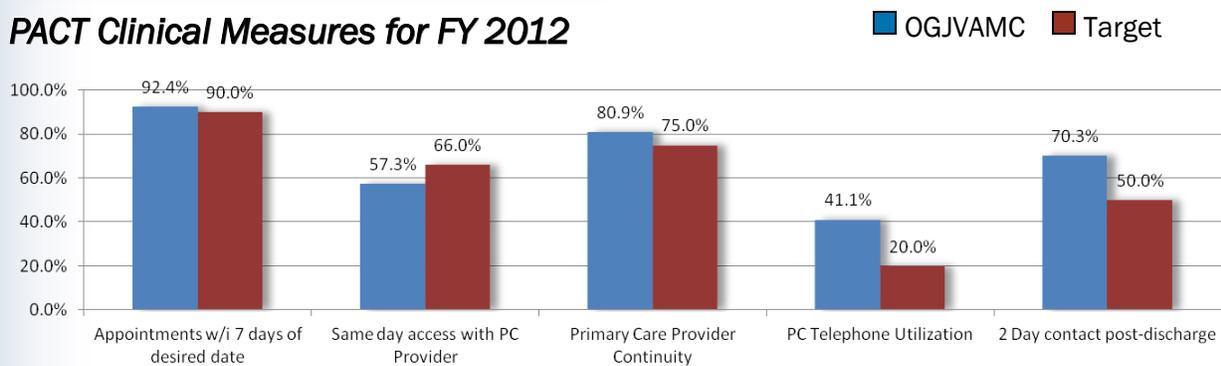
PACT is a Veteran-Centric Partnership: The Veteran and his or her teamlet work together to assess and treat the whole person, with an emphasis on lifelong preventive health and wellness. This partnership encourages open communication between the Veteran and his or her health care team.

PACT is Increased Access to Care: The Veteran now has more options in communicating with his or her health care professionals and receiving care – Primary Care visits, telephone follow ups, secure messaging, telehealth appointments, and same day visits with his or her provider and other teamlet members such as the dietician, social worker and Circle of Care Clinic .

PACT is Coordinated Care: The teamlet coordinates all aspects of a Veteran’s health care to include within the teamlet, with specialists in other services or non-VA providers, and the transition from hospital care to ambulatory care. The objective is ensuring seamless coordination and continuity of care.



PACT Clinical Measures for FY 2012



The Veteran and his or her teamlet work together to assess and treat the whole person, with an emphasis on lifelong preventive health and wellness.

Helping More Vets Stay at Home

OGJVAMC has a comprehensive Home and Community Based Care (H&CBC) program that provides needed services to enable Veterans to remain in their home setting as long as possible. H&CBC programs may be provided singularly or in combination with other programs. The overall target for H&CBC was an average daily census of 196, which was exceeded with an average daily census of 264 (134.7% of the target).

Home Based Primary Care brings health care to the comfort of the Veteran's home, providing routine care and continuous services for complex chronic disabling diseases. HBPC was started in 2008 and expanded to a second satellite team at Watersmeet, MI, in 2009. To date, the program has served over 290 Veterans.

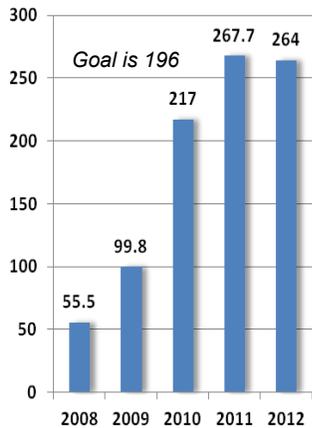
Home Telehealth Program provides in-home monitoring and care coordination for Veterans with chronic diseases such as CHF, COPD, diabetes, hypertension. The program has expanded into supporting Veter-



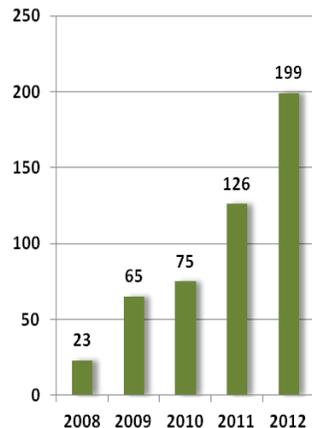
ans with palliative care needs, dementia, and their general caregivers. The goal of this program is to reduce visits to the Medical Center and bed days of care (-79% in 2012). Care coordinators assist Veterans with navigating their healthcare and promoting self management skills through education and case management.

- H&CBC Services**
- Home Base Primary Care (HBPC)
 - Home Telehealth
 - Purchased Skilled Home Care
 - Outpatient Respite
 - Home Hospice
 - Homemaker/Home Health Aide
 - Contract Adult Day Health Care
 - Veterans Directed Home Care
 - Contract Nursing Home

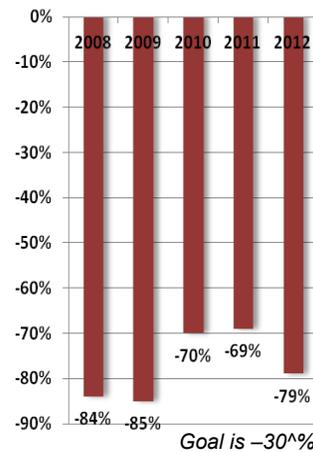
Ave Daily Census for H&CBC



Home Telehealth Enrollment



Telehealth & Decreasing Bed Days of Care



OGJVAMC has a comprehensive Home and Community Based Care (H&CBC) program that provides needed services to enable Veterans to remain in their home setting as long as possible.

Health Care for Women Veterans

Women constitute more than 14% of today's active-duty and represent the largest growing subpopulation of the U.S. Armed Forces.

The Women's Veterans Program at the OGJVAMC is committed to excellence in addressing health care needs of all women Veterans and ensuring that timely, high-quality, and comprehensive health care services are provided in a sensitive and safe environment.

OGJVAMC has continued to enhance its women's health programs in 2012. Notable progress includes:

- A clinical pharmacy specialist (CPS) now offers chronic disease management to female patients diagnosed with diabetes, hypertension, and/or ischemic heart disease through tele-health services.
- OGJVAMC and each of its seven community Outpatient Clinics offer a clinically trained, gender specific health care

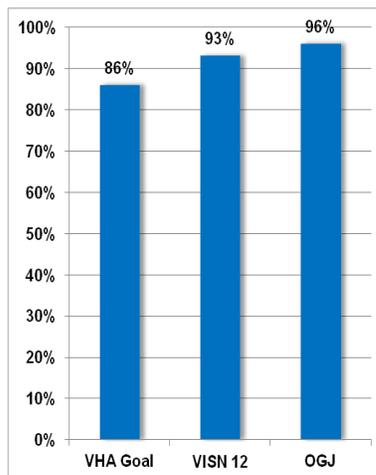


provider available to all female Veterans to ensure comprehensive health care is available in a single visit.

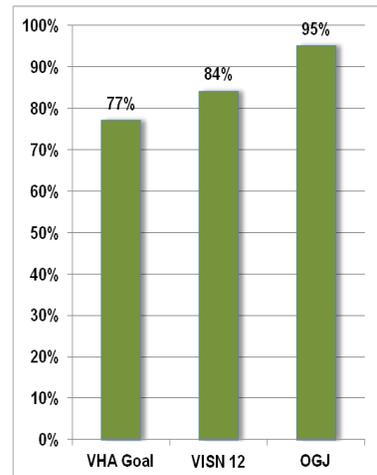
- Enhanced care coordination of VA maternity care services is offered through our fee basis (purchased care) program.
- OGJVAMC's Women's health services have continued to demonstrate excellence in clinical practices. This is evidenced by the External Peer Review Process (EPRP) clinical measures in breast and cervical cancer screenings (see below), and in Diabetes Mellitus-HbA1c>9, where OGJVAMC measured 9.6 percent (lower is better), the best in VISN12.



Cervical Cancer Screenings (age 21-64)



Breast Cancer Screenings (age 50-69)



Women constitute more than 14% of today's active-duty and represent the largest growing subpopulation of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Expanding Telehealth Care

OGJVAMC continues to expand state of the art telehealth audio/visual technology to deliver services to rural Veterans not close to a VA health care specialty provider. Telehealth services include Clinical Video Conferencing, Store and Forward, and Home Telehealth (see page 11).



OGJVAMC was one of the first in the nation to implement diagnostic tele-pathology in 1996. In 1998, the tele-pulmonology clinic was piloted at OGJVAMC and continues to run today. Today, telehealth capability has been expanded to OGJVAMC's community based clinics and covers 24 specialty areas (see table at right).

The benefits of telehealth appointments are increased access to specialty care services not available locally and the reduced travel time and costs for the Veteran.

Feedback received from patients has been positive. "As one patient noted, he liked the convenience of not having to travel hundreds of miles, and he still gets the same results," said Jeanne Johnson, Telehealth Coordinator at OGJVAMC. "Many

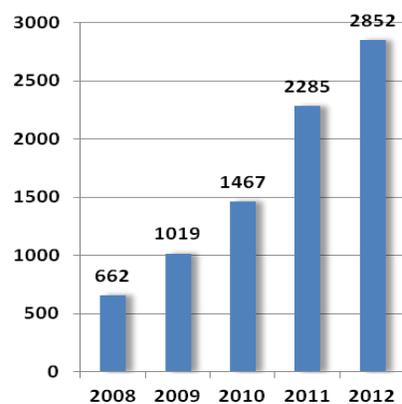
of our patients have said, it is just as good as being in the room with the doctor."

Twenty five percent of OGJVAMC patients utilized some type of virtual care in 2012, including telehealth, secure messaging and electronic consults. However, telehealth is not meant to replace face-to-face care but rather to enhance the overall health care experience in a convenient, efficient and cost effective manner.

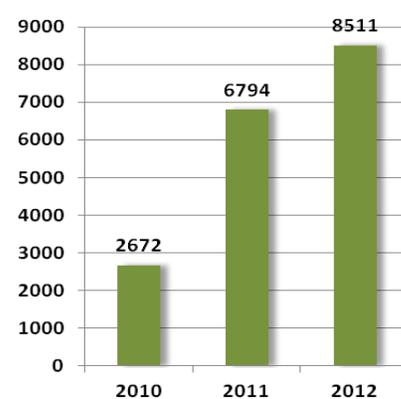
Telehealth Services

- Audiology
- Behavioral Health (Gen)
- Cardiology
- Comp & Pension (MH)
- Diabetes
- Diabetic Education
- Endocrinology
- Infectious Disease
- Nephrology
- Nutrition
- Pharmacy
- Post-Op Surgery
- Pre-Op Anesthesia
- Primary Care
- Prosthetics
- Psychiatry
- PTSD
- Pulmonology
- Retinal Imaging
- Rheumatology
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Substance Abuse
- Thoracic Surgery
- Weight Management
- Cardio arrhythmia (2013)
- Dermatology (2013)
- OB/GYN (2013)
- Palliative Care (2013)

No. of patients using telehealth*



No. of telehealth appointments*



* Does not include Home Telehealth (see page 11)

As one patient noted, he liked the convenience of not having to travel hundreds of miles, and he still gets the same results."

~ Jeanne Johnson, RN, Telehealth Coordinator

Compassionate Hospice & Palliative Care

OGJVAMC has an active Hospice and Palliative Care Program for Veterans in both inpatient and home-based care. VA services include palliative care consults, inpatient hospice or palliative care, home-based primary care, and contracts with area home health/hospice agencies.

A team of specially trained and certified nurses, providers, social workers, dietitians, therapists, and the medical center chaplain support the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of Veterans in the program.

“Recent studies have shown that palliative care has been associated with increased quality of life and patient satisfaction as well as extending life,” said Selena Okler, Palliative Care RN.

“Our newest palliative care service is our Home Telehealth Program, where our care coordinators can monitor these Veterans



daily and assist them with interventions as needed to keep them comfortable and in their homes for as long as possible,” said Sarah Buckley, Program Director of Home and Community Based Care.

OGJVAMC recently completed construction on four spacious hospice/palliative care rooms in its 40-bed Community Living Center.

“These rooms will provide a much more comfortable environment for both the Veteran and his or her family as they deal with a chronic disease or terminal diagnosis,” said Okler.

Since hospice and palliative care are part of the VHA Medical Benefits Package, all enrolled Veterans are eligible if they meet the clinical need for the service. *For further information on VA’s Hospice and Palliative Care Program*, call 1-800-215-8262, extension 34504, or visit [www.va.gov/GERIATRICS/Guide/LongTermCare/Hospice and Palliative Care.asp](http://www.va.gov/GERIATRICS/Guide/LongTermCare/Hospice%20and%20Palliative%20Care.asp)



“Recent studies have shown that palliative care has been associated with increased quality of life and patient satisfaction as well as extending life.”

~ Selena Okler, Palliative Care RN

Making Wishes Come True

Through its **Butterfly Wish Program**, the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center is making wishes come true for Veterans. The program was initiated by the OGJVAMC's Community Living Center and Home Based Primary Care. It is similar to the Last Wish or Make a Wish Programs, where hospice and palliative care Veterans are given an opportunity to make a wish as they near the end of their lives. OGJVAMC staff then collaborates to make their wishes come true. Eight wishes were fulfilled in 2012.



Steve Steeno, a Viet Nam Army Veteran, is presented his recumbent bike by OGJVAMC employees Mary Bertucci, Susan Scullon, and Bryan Carter.



Richard Waldron, a Korean War Army Veteran, boarding a plane to fulfill his Butterfly wish to visit his family, including three great grandchildren, in Lansing, Michigan.



Navy Veteran Vernon Runge enjoying his Christmas decorations in his palliative care room, courtesy of the CLC "elves." Part of his Butterfly wish was to have an open house for patients and staff to come visit his beautifully decorated room and spread Christmas cheer - many did.



Ken Salli, WWII Navy Veteran, was thrilled to receive a day at the casino. He and his family were transported in style via a limousine. VA employee Laura Baumler, left, provided the limousine and personally chauffeured the Salli family.

Other Wishes Fulfilled in 2012:

A signed Detroit Lions football in display case

Wedding anniversary celebration with cake, flowers, and sparkling apple juice

Visited wife's grave-site along with floral arrangements and food for a picnic

Celebrate an early Christmas with family with food and decorations

It is similar to the Last Wish or Make a Wish Programs, where hospice and palliative care Veterans are given an opportunity to make a wish as they near the end of their lives.

Taking Care of Returning Soldiers

OEF/OIF/OND

OGJVAMC's Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) program has been active for more than seven years.

The OEF/OIF/OND team works with the Escanaba Vet Center and other VA offices in a coordinated effort to reach out to military personnel returning from operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and assisting them in making a seamless transition back to their family and communities and to VA health care.

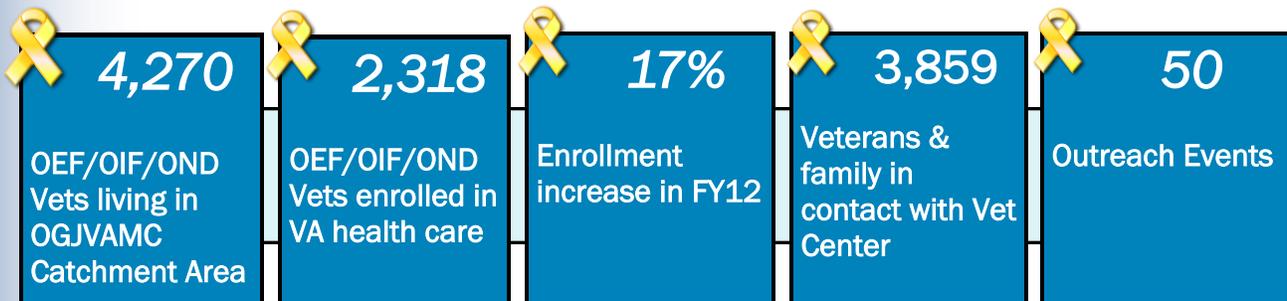
The team provides important benefit and enrollment information regarding VA health care to Veterans returning to OGJVAMC's geographic area. They help combat Veterans reintegrate into their communities and civilian life.

The team's other responsibilities include coordinating the continuity of ambulatory and inpatient care upon discharge or transfer from military hospitals and assessing all newly enrolled OEF/OIF/OND Veterans for community resource needs and care management.

Escanaba Vet Center

The VA Vet Center in Escanaba, MI is one of 300 nationwide, serving Veterans in rural and underserved areas. Its primary mission is to help combat Veterans and Veterans who have been victims of military sexual trauma readjust to civilian life. This is done by helping the Veteran identify problems and then offering individual, family, and group counseling for a host of issues including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), military sexual trauma, substance abuse and bereavement.

The Mobile Vet Center (MVC) takes the Vet Center mission on the road, going wherever needed to serve Veterans. The internet satellite and onboard generator assures that Vet Center counselors will have real time access to the Veteran's VA records on a secure system. A video conferencing system allows face-to-face visits between the Veteran and a VA health provider for such things as medication management.



Welcome Home for the 1430th Eng. Co.

OGJVAMC hosted the Michigan Army National Guard's 1430th Engineering Company over the weekend of March 3-4, 2012. The 1430th, based in Marquette and Gladstone, Michigan, recently returned from Afghanistan in November 2011. In order to enhance delivery of health care to these soldiers, the medical center provided medical appointments on their drill weekend to establish care within the VA health care system.

"There was a whole company of soldiers returning from combat, and we were trying to figure out how to keep our Marquette VA Clinic, which is one of our busiest clinics, from being overwhelmed with all these new medical evals," said Kathy Truax, OGJVAMC's OEF/OIF/OND Program Coordinator.

The creative answer was to open some of OGJVAMC's primary clinics as well as pro-



vide lab, imaging and audiology on the weekend to efficiently examine and process these soldiers, of which half came on Saturday and half on Sunday. "This alleviated the soldiers from having to take time off from work or school to make it to a VA medical appointment," said Truax.

Held in conjunction with the medical appointments was OGJVAMC's annual Welcome Home Event, which was open to all Veterans and their families on both days.



The event featured information booths with medical center staff, Veteran Service Officers, the VA Vet Center and other reps on hand to discuss VA health care and other benefits, such as VA home loans, education benefits and federal employment opportunities.

In order to enhance delivery of health care to these soldiers, the medical center provided medical appointments on their drill weekend to establish care within the VA health care system.

Peer Support Groups Helping Vets

“Shell shocked,” “battle or combat fatigue,” and “PTSD” are some of the evolving terms for the impact that war has had on troops throughout the last 100 years.

While much has been made in the press of PTSD, in reality, war has always impacted the mental health of soldiers and sailors. Today, however, treatments are more varied and effective.

One of the effective treatments used today by OGJVAMC in its Mental Health Recovery program is peer led, peer support recovery groups. The VA’s Outpatient Clinic in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, is leading the way as the first in the VA to utilize it.

“It is not uncommon for participants in peer support groups to say that they are glad the group is being led by someone who knows where they have been or understand where they are coming from,” said Tim Bahr, the clinic’s certified Peer Support Specialist. Bahr is a long-serving Marine Corp Veteran currently facilitating fourteen peer support groups, including two Veteran spouse groups. He is also recovering from PTSD.



Studies have demonstrated the positive impact peer support has in improving social functioning and quality of life for Veterans while reducing hospitalizations and use of crisis services.

“One Vietnam combat Vet had isolated himself from pretty much everyone since returning from the war,” said Bahr. “He wanted little, if any, interaction with others. After being fired from his long time job, and with the insistence of his wife, the Veteran joined one of the clinic’s peer led, peer support recovery groups, and today he is getting out and socializing with members of the group,” Bahr added.

As a result of the success of the Rhinelander groups, OGJVAMC has started two peer support groups in Iron Mountain. “We mentor and educate our fellow service members by using our own recovery stories,” said Patrick Flynn, certified VA Peer Support Specialist for the Iron Mountain groups. “We allow our Veterans to attend as many group sessions as they wish.”

Peer support groups and evidenced-based therapies are both part of the VA’s mental health recovery model. “Mental health recovery is about the Veteran finding his or her way in the world – the way that works best for them so they can live the best life possible,” said Karen Krebsbach, Recovery Coordinator at OGJVAMC.

“Recovery groups change the emphasis from ‘What is wrong with you’ to ‘what is right with you,’” said Krebsbach.

For more information on peer led, peer support groups or other mental health treatments, call 1-800-215-8262, extension 32777.

“Recovery groups change the emphasis from ‘What is wrong with you’ to ‘what is right with you.’”

~ Karen Krebsbach, Recovery Coordinator at OGJVAMC

Weight Loss Improves Quality of Life

During 2012, 631 Veterans participated in OGJVAMC's MOVE! weight loss program. The MOVE! Program is designed by the VA's National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention to help Veterans lose weight, keep it off and improve their health.

"I use to be on so many meds from being overweight, 29 pills a day, and now I only take two," said Roger Newhouse, who participated in the program for six months and lost 50 pounds.

John Schumacher is another Veteran who participated in the program for eight months and lost 90 pounds. "I am now motivated to walk five miles a day, and before I couldn't walk very far," said Schumacher. "Now my blood pressure, cholesterol, and triglycerides are all normal."



"The MOVE! Program educates Veterans on how to incorporate healthy lifestyle changes and food choices, which can be maintained for long term success," said Andrea Millan, a dietician at OGJVAMC and the MOVE! program coordinator.

"Weight loss is one benefit of a healthier lifestyle, but improvements in health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol as well as an overall improved quality of life is the ultimate goal."

A 5% weight loss is considered a medically significant weight loss capable of improving these health conditions.

New in 2012, was a process for same day enrollment into the MOVE! program. The MOVE! weight loss program is also held at each of the Medical Center's seven community outpatient clinics located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and northern Wisconsin.

Any Veterans interested in the MOVE! program may call 1-800-215-8262, extension 32160, or talk to their VA physician or nurse.



631

Veterans participated in MOVE! in 2012

1,348

Total pounds MOVE! grads lost in 2012

50

Pounds MOVE! grads lost on average in 2012

284

Average start weight

235

Average end weight

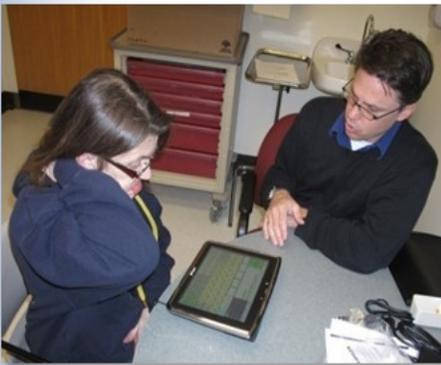
Providing Alternative Communications

In 2012, OGVAMC activated a specialty clinic that focuses on alternative augmentative communications. Veterans are now able to be assessed and fitted with high-tech speech generating communication devices that allow them to verbally communicate clearly to others despite their inability to speak.

Various diseases, such as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and viral Encephalitis, can limit people's ability to communicate their wants and needs as well as social and occupational messages.

"These diseases progress in a rapid fashion or can be triggered suddenly by a stroke or traumatic brain injury, and it drastically changes a person's ability to speak," said Jim Zeigler, Chief, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at OGVAMC.

The VA speech-pathology and prosthetics programs work in unison to assess, provide, and maintain the computerized high-tech devices that are designed to capitalize upon each Veteran's individual ability level and to plan for future disease progres-



sion. Devices that feature the use of touch are appropriate initially. However, as the individual's muscular strength and coordination are reduced, technological innovations, such as



head mouse and eye gaze, are applied to trigger a human-sounding voice. This is done by running a mouse cursor over a picture, word or phrase on the device. Methods such as eye blinking or holding a cursor for a prescribed duration over a chosen message icon add to the flexibility and quality of life.

"These devices not only allow individuals to communicate face-to-face with family, caregivers and others," said Zeigler, "they enable the Veteran to answer the phone; access the internet; and turn on and off lights, televisions, and computers."

These devices have a core vocabulary already preprogrammed with word predictor capability. As the user begins to type a word, a list of words pop up, and the correct word can be selected without typing any further. Pre-stored phrases and messages are particularly good for phone conversations.

For more information on alternative augmentative communications, call 1-800-215-8262, extension 34767.

"These devices not only allow individuals to communicate face-to-face with family, caregivers and others, they enable the Veteran to answer the phone; access the internet; and turn on and off lights, televisions, and computers."

~ Jim Zeigler, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service

Overcoming Transportation Barriers

OGJVAMC launched the new Veterans Transportation Service (VTS) in January 2012, designed to overcome barriers to accessing VA health care by increasing transportation resources and options. This not only includes VA owned resources but those from Veteran Service Organizations and community transportation services as well. While this free service is available to all Veterans, it is particularly targeted for Veterans who are visually impaired, elderly, or immobilized due to disease or disability, and those living in rural and highly rural areas.

Currently the VTS program at OGJVAMC consists of: (1) two 16 passenger vans accommodating oxygen tanks and up to three wheel chairs each, (2) seven DAV van routes operated by volunteers from the Disabled American Veterans, and (3) one coach bus for bi-weekly trips to Milwaukee VAMC for specialty care treatment.

In addition to the established seven DAV van routes, there are now two set routes each week for the VA-owned 16 passenger vans servicing Veterans within a 50 mile radius of OGJVAMC. Exceptions to the 50 mile radius limit and separate trips for individual Veterans are made on a case-by-case basis for Veterans who are deemed to be in greatest need of this service.

Each VA bus carries a Certified Nursing Assistant to provide care to Veterans as necessary.



“Overall, the program has been very well received by the Veteran community,” said Isaac Armstrong, OGJVAMC VTS Coordinator. “Many riders have expressed their appreciation for this service as well as the professional and caring conduct of the staff on the buses.” 80% of all passengers have already used VTS to come back for other appointments.

Once scheduled for a medical appointment, Veterans needing transportation should call the VTS Coordinator at 1-800-215-8262, extension 33849 to set up travel arrangements (on a first come-first serve basis) or to be referred to the most



| | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| <p>1,398 VTS van trips</p> | <p>47,631 Miles transporting Veterans in VTS vans</p> | <p>\$41,359 Cost savings by using VTS vans</p> | <p>297,848 Miles transporting Veterans in DAV vans</p> | <p>5/146 Full time VTS staff / volunteer drivers</p> |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|

Rural Health Projects & Collaboration

The OGJVAMC continues to make progress in increasing services to rural Veterans. OGJVAMC received over \$2.56 million from the VA Office of Rural Health (ORH) to sustain or expand rural health care programs, such as Home Based Primary Care, Enhanced Rural Access Network for Growth Enhancement (E-RANGE), and Hospice & Palliative Care. Specifically, OGJVAMC:

- Established a second **E-RANGE** team in Hancock, Michigan, to serve and provide case management for rural Veterans with severe mental health issues.
- Expanded its **Hospice and Palliative Care program**. *See page 14.*
- Renovated and/or expanded three of its **community outpatient clinics**
- Established **Veterans Transportation Service** to increase access to care through efficient transportation assistance to OGJVAMC (funded by ORH nationally). *See page 21.*



Collaboration with Tribal Nations

Additionally, OGJVAMC continues to collaborate with area tribal nations, to include:

- Operating a **VA Home Based Primary Care office** at the Lac Vieux Tribe in Watersmeet, Michigan.
- Pursuing a **Memorandum of Understanding with the Sault Tribal Health Center** in Manistique, MI, to provide optometry services to Veterans.
- Co-hosting a **Veteran Listening Session with the Sault Tribal Health Service** to address Veteran concerns and discuss how Veterans can be better served.
- Hosting a **bi-weekly Native American PTSD treatment group**.



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Ending Veteran Homelessness

Progress is being made towards VA's goal to end Veteran homelessness by 2015. From January 2010 to January 2012 (the most recent years for data), Veteran homelessness has dropped by 19 percent.

Homelessness in the rural and highly-rural areas of Michigan's Upper Peninsula and Northeastern Wisconsin presents much differently than in urban areas around the country. Rural homelessness is often "hidden." Lack of shelter resources result in individuals and families living in doubled-up situations, garages, barns, and camps instead of on the street or homeless shelter.

Healthcare for Homeless Veterans Program

OGJVAMC's Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) program staff help Veterans obtain safe adequate shelter/housing by providing information and referral to appropriate community resources that will facilitate their exit from homelessness and improve their quality of life. HCHV services include (but are not limited to) behavioral health assessment, substance abuse treatment, referral for medical services, and direct case management.

Contract Residential Housing Program

Since 2011, OGJVAMC has partnered with the Great Lakes Residential Recovery Center, located in Marquette, Michigan, to provide contract transitional housing services to homeless Veterans. Seventeen Veterans were served through this program in 2012.

HUD-VASH Program

The VA, in partnership with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), provides vouchers to subsidize rental housing for homeless Veterans and their immediate families. The VA screens eligible Veterans and provides case management while HUD provides the rental subsidies from its Housing Choice program. There are currently 14 vouchers being used by Veterans in the Upper Peninsula.

CARF Accreditation

OGJVAMC's HCHV Program received accreditation from CARF International, an independent nonprofit organization that accredits specialized services. The CARF inspection and survey made no recommendations, which is an extraordinary achievement as only three percent of CARF surveys result in no recommendations.

Homeless or at risk Veterans can call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at: 1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838) or visit <http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/NationalCallCenter.asp>.

Homeless or At Risk Veterans—2012

- **17** used the Contract Residential Housing Program
- **14** using HUD-VASH vouchers to subsidize rental housing
- **161** Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Homelessness in the rural and highly-rural areas of Michigan's Upper Peninsula and Northeastern Wisconsin presents much differently than in urban areas around the country.

OGJVAMC on the Air

Since December of 2011, OGJVAMC has partnered with WJNR Radio, 101.5 FM, and the local Dickinson County Veteran Service Officer for a monthly live radio show called Veterans Information Hour. Hosted by a long time radio personality Aaron Harper and VSO Chuck Lantz, the medical center has provided subject matter experts each month to talk about the various benefits and services on the one-hour, live broadcast. Both Aaron and Chuck, Viet Nam and Desert Storm Veterans respectively, are both users and strong supporters of OGJVAMC. Check out the 2012 guests and topics below.



Women Veterans Program



Hospice & Palliative Care



Veterans Justice Outreach



Circle of Care Clinic



VA Transplants



Rural Health Initiatives



Veteran Homelessness in conjunction with VA2K Walk & Health Fair



Medical Center Director



Telehealth & Tele-Diabetes

Not Pictured: Chief of Staff & Associate Medical Center Director



OGJVAMC has partnered with WJNR Radio, 101.5 FM, and the local Dickinson County Veteran Service Officer for a monthly live radio show called Veterans Information Hour.

Students Learn About VA Careers



OGJVAMC hosted 140 juniors from the Kingsford High School over two-days, May 21-22, providing a tour of the medical center and first-hand look at VA careers.

“Being located in a rural area makes it difficult to recruit various specialty professions,” said MaryAnne Gibler, EEO Program Manager at the medical center, “so our Workforce Development and EEO Diversity Committees are dedicated to reaching out to our community to tap into local talent.”

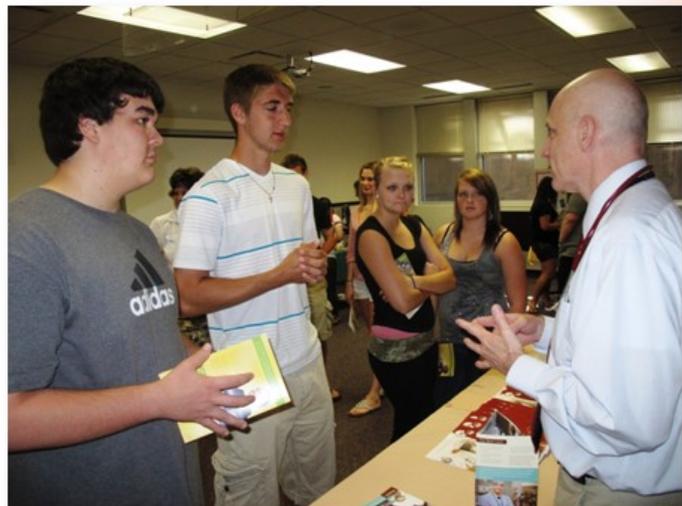
Over 50 VA employees participated in showing students just what they do and what type of education was needed to accomplish their goals. After a facility tour, students attended two “career booths” of their choice, out of seven available, and learned about two to three careers at each booth.

Students were exposed to a variety of professions ranging from social work, nursing, physician, and rehabilitation medicine to finance, human resources, informational technology and health care management.

In all, 20 careers were highlighted. In many of the sessions, students participated in hands-on demonstrations such as checking airways of a fully computerized patient mannequin and performing laparoscopic surgery using a training device. Students interested in engineering careers were given a tour of the various shops and professions that keep the medical center fully functioning.

“The passionate dedication of the VA employees we met over these two days is obvious,” said Kendalynn Sutton, an English teacher at Kingsford High School. “They served to illustrate to our students how hard work, goal setting and passion lead to career success.”

“The Kingsford High School Flivver Foundation Class worked with us to assist the junior class in looking to the future,” said Gibler, who has presented VA careers at various local schools.



“Being located in a rural area makes it difficult to recruit various specialty professions, so our Workforce Development and EEO Diversity Committees are dedicated to reaching out to our community to tap into local talent.”

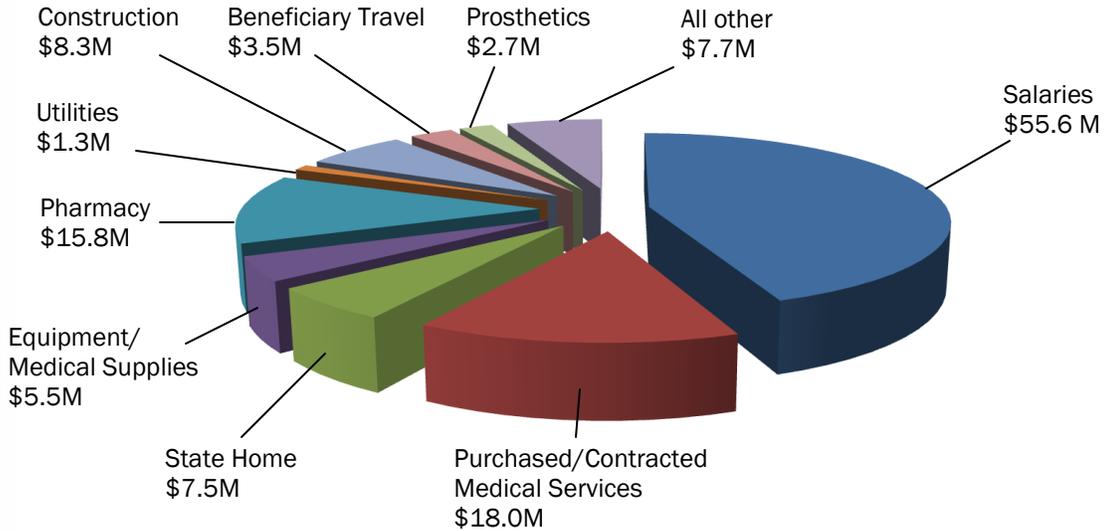
~ MaryAnne Gibler, EEO Program Manager

Financial Summary for Fiscal Year 2012

Operating Expenditures

\$125.9M

FY 2012 Operating Expenditures



Construction Expenditures

\$8,317,743

FY 2012 Construction Expenditures

- \$1,844,679** Expand Mental Health spaces, 3rd floor waiting area.
- \$3,048,943** Renovate and expand Pathology and Laboratory.
- \$2,050,355** Other construction projects to include replacing windows, renovating elevators, installing security fence, and HVAC.
- \$1,373,766** Design drawings for nine FY13 and 14 projects to include renovating/expanding Surgery, Imaging, and 4th and 5th floors.

Rural Health Expenditures

\$2,562,128

FY 2012 Rural Health Initiatives

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| \$151,600 Expand Hospice & Palliative Care Program | \$609,900 Sustain HBPC Program at Lac Viewx Tribe | \$742,000 Mental Health E-RANGE Program | \$379,622 Sustain ENT & Cataract Programs | \$90,256 Renovate, Expand CBOCs | \$383,750 Sustain Manistique Outreach Clinic | \$205,000 Facility Equipment & Renovation |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|---|

Home Grown Makeover

OGJVAMC holds Adopt-a-Garden Contest

Spring and summer brought a fresh look to the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center. Services, departments and groups of employees participated in the Medical Center's Adopt-a-Garden contest, providing the facility with its very own home grown makeover! Garden areas around the facility and grounds were chosen in the spring on a first come first serve basis by fifteen entrants. Employees planted and faithfully tended the creative gardens throughout the summer, no easy feat with the extremely hot and dry weather in 2012. Gardens were judged by employees from services not participating in the contest, and picking a winner was not easy. Awards were presented at the annual employee picnic. Regardless the outcome of the contest, OGJVAMC experienced a very nice, colorful makeover that impressed Veterans and employees alike.



Services, departments and groups of employees participated in the Medical Center's Adopt-a-Garden contest, providing the facility with its very own home grown makeover!

2012 Annual Report

Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center

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