



2013 HYPERTENSION CONTROL CHAMPION: VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Million Hearts®—Success in Blood Pressure Control

FAST FACTS

VHA's Patient Population

VHA is America's largest integrated health care system with more than 1,700 care facilities, serving 8.76 million veterans each year.



The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a long history—going back to the mid-1990s—of a strong focus on transparency and performance management and using that approach to drive improvements in care for veterans. VHA has served as a model for other health care systems looking to improve patient care, including in the area of control of high blood pressure, also called hypertension. VHA maintains 75% blood pressure control rates among veterans and is proud to be recognized as a 2013 Million Hearts® Hypertension Control Champion.

WHAT WE DID

VHA's journey to better support veterans with high blood pressure has involved the widespread, long-standing efforts of many individuals, teams, and programs across all VA medical centers and other care sites. A few notable highlights include the following:

- VA has invested substantially in long-term research to accelerate improvements in veterans' health care. VA has a track record of **nearly 50 years of conducting studies in areas related**

to blood pressure management, including studies that defined the basis for modern hypertension treatment. These efforts have created a continuous learning system that better serves veterans' needs and also benefits the broader health care community.

- VHA's industry-leading telehealth and home-based primary care initiatives allow **home blood pressure monitoring** so clinicians and patient-aligned care teams receive dashboard information on veterans' blood pressure control rates. These efforts have been successful in helping veterans achieve their target blood pressure goals without frequent office visits.
- VA works jointly with the U. S. Department of Defense (DoD) to develop **evidence-based clinical practice guidelines** (e.g., hypertension management and other heart health areas) for providers on the basis of applicable internal and external research studies and standards. These guidelines are essential to providing quality, effective, and patient-centered care for VA and DoD beneficiaries and also help the broader health care community.

Organization Information for Veterans Health Administration

Web site: www.va.gov/health/aboutvha.asp

Phone: 1-877-222-VETS (8387)

- VHA has put into action diverse outreach strategies to support the veteran populations it serves in achieving better heart health and blood pressure control. For example, **MOVE!® Weight Management Program for Veterans** has helped more than 300,000 people lose weight, keep it off, and improve their general health and blood pressure management.
- VHA enhances **medication adherence** across care sites through systemwide use of 90-day, rather than 30-day, prescriptions for medications used to treat hypertension. Prescription fulfillment is convenient through mail order using the online MyHealthVet reordering system.

WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED

These strategies, alongside patient outreach programs, helped VHA maintain 75% blood pressure control rates among veterans. As the largest integrated health care system in the United States, VHA is uniquely positioned to share its successful evidence-based programs and world class research with the health care community so others can benefit from its experience.

WHAT WE LEARNED

According to Carolyn Clancy, MD, assistant deputy under secretary for health for quality, safety, and value, “VHA is a learning health care system. People take enormous pride in providing the best possible care to veterans wherever they are, irrespective of the other challenges they face. We have experts who have championed blood pressure control and heart health, and we have the privilege, in a very timely way, to know how we are doing. Our long-standing investments in electronic health records and information management have supported these capabilities. We are constantly striving to improve and make it better for veterans.”