



*(May 10, 2016)*

In order to further improve the lines of communication and to respond to the concerns between the National VA Council and you our members, I have established a National VA Council Briefing. This NVAC Briefing will bring you the latest news and developments within DVA and provide you with the current status of issues this Council is currently addressing. I believe that this NVAC Briefing will greatly enhance the way in which we communicate and the way in which we share new information, keeping you better informed.

**Alma L. Lee**  
National VA Council, President

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**In This Briefing: U.S. Medicine Direct - May Issue**  
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**U.S. MEDICINE NEWS UPDATE**

**Final Agent Orange Report: Stronger Link to Bladder Cancer, Hypothyroidism**

WASHINGTON - The Institute of Medicine (IOM) changed the classification of three medical conditions in its last congressionally-ordered review of the evidence of health problems associated with exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides during the Vietnam War. Notably, the IOM upgraded bladder cancer and hypothyroidism to "limited or suggestive" evidence from "inadequate or insufficient" category. The new category indicates that a link could exist between exposure to a chemical and increased risk of the specific condition. [More](#)  
<http://www.usmedicine.com/agencies/departments-of-veterans-affairs/final-agent-orange-report-stronger-link-to-bladder-cancer-hypothyroidism/>

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MAY ISSUE**

**VA Scheduling Role for New 'Choice Program' Raises Concerns**

WASHINGTON - The Veterans Choice Program was created in the aftermath of a scandal involving misrepresented wait lists for healthcare appointments at the VA, so legislators said they were baffled why the agency now wants to interject itself into the appointment process as the program is revised and expanded. Currently, a third-party contractor calls the veteran to schedule the appointment with a community-care provider, but officials told Congress that the agency wants to be more in the "center" of that process. [More](http://www.usmedicine.com/agencies/department-of-veterans-affairs/va-scheduling-role-for-new-choice-program-raises-concerns/)  
<http://www.usmedicine.com/agencies/department-of-veterans-affairs/va-scheduling-role-for-new-choice-program-raises-concerns/>



Baligh Yehia, MD

### Opinion Poll:

Please [click here to participate](#) in this month's U.S. Medicine readership poll. Should the VA play a role in scheduling veterans' appointments for outside care?



### Bleeding Risk Greater for Veterans on Warfarin Than Previously Expected

NEW YORK - Worried that a fall might lead to traumatic intracranial bleeding, many physicians are wary of prescribing warfarin to older adults with atrial fibrillation (AFib). New research on veterans does nothing to put those concerns to rest. In fact, a study found that the rate of traumatic intracranial bleeding among older adults with AFib initiating warfarin therapy actually was higher than previously reported in clinical trials. [More](http://www.usmedicine.com/agencies/department-of-veterans-affairs/bleeding-risk-greater-for-veterans-on-warfarin-than-previously-expected/)  
<http://www.usmedicine.com/agencies/department-of-veterans-affairs/bleeding-risk-greater-for-veterans-on-warfarin-than-previously-expected/>

### Proposal to Phase Out VA Healthcare Upsets Veteran Groups

WASHINGTON - A controversial proposal to give all current VA-enrolled veterans the option of community care and to transition the rest of veterans to private market healthcare during the next two decades is making veteran service organizations and others uneasy. The 34-page statement, called the "strawman document," was written by seven of the 15 members of the Commission on Care. It clearly states that it represents the views of the authors and not the commission as a whole. The final report by the entire commission, due June 30, is widely anticipated by VA and lawmakers. [More](http://www.usmedicine.com/non-clinical-topics/news/proposal-to-phase-out-va-healthcare-upsets-veteran-groups/)  
<http://www.usmedicine.com/non-clinical-topics/news/proposal-to-phase-out-va-healthcare-upsets-veteran-groups/>

### From the Editor-in-Chief

"Always read something that will make you look good if you die in the middle of it." - P. J. O'Rourke.



Editor-In-Chief  
Chester "Trip"

Buckenmaier  
III, MD, COL  
(ret.) MC, USA

Sadly, like most Americans, O'Rourke's humorous quote concerning death is representative of the lack of attention most folks pay this unavoidable destination we all eventually must face. Recognizing the tremendous impact death has on individuals and their loved ones, it is startling how little time and effort most people devote to planning for the inescapable event. I understand mortality is usually not a favorite topic of contemplation for most people, but I find our culture's general ignorance about topics related to death and dying concerning as a healthcare professional. [More](#)  
<http://www.usmedicine.com/editor-in-chief/always-read-something-that-will-make-you-look-good-if-you-die-in-the-middle-of-it/>