



*(November 10, 2015)*

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 - November Issue**

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**U.S. MEDICINE NEWS UPDATE**

**Maps and Much More Are Changing at VA**

WASHINGTON - For the VA, form affects function. Secretary Robert McDonald recognized that as soon as he stepped into the agency's top leadership role. He made it clear that multiple maps and reporting lines were crippling the ability of the organization to meet veterans' needs. The new map divides the country into five regions for all of the VA's service lines - Veterans' Benefits Administration (VBA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA) and Veterans Health Administration (VHA). The VHA will have 18 VISNs within the five districts once the transition is complete, which is expected to be late in fiscal year 2017, although many of the other related initiatives are expected to go into effect much sooner. [More](#)



Bob Snyder, executive director of the MyVA Task Force

<http://www.usmedicine.com/agencies/department-of-veterans-affairs/maps-and-much-more-are-changing-at-va/>

## Opinion Poll:

[Please click here](#) to participate in this month's U.S. Medicine readership poll.

**Do multiple maps and reporting lines adversely affect the VA's ability to meet veterans' needs?**



<http://www.usmedicine.com/opinion/do-multiple-maps-and-reporting-lines-adversely-affect-the-vas-ability-to-meet-veterans-needs/>

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE NOVEMBER ISSUE

### VA Investigates Use of Telehealth for Some Post-Operative Follow-Up

NASHVILLE - As difficult as it is for some veterans to get to routine healthcare appointments, doing so after surgery - even with a low-complexity procedure - can be much worse. That's why VA researchers are investigating the option of delivering post-operative care by telehealth - video or telephone - for veterans undergoing less serious types of surgery. A recent study at the Nashville VAMC found that most veterans who have undergone those types of surgery prefer using telehealth. [More](#)

<http://www.usmedicine.com/agencies/department-of-veterans-affairs/va-researchers-look-at-offering-some-post-op-follow-up-through-telehealth/>

### Outgoing DHA Chief Discusses Success, Goals

WASHINGTON - DoD officials celebrated the second anniversary of the Defense Health Agency last month, marking what the agency says is its achievement of full operating capability as a combat support agency. "This is more of a milestone in this thing we are calling full operating capability in the stand up of the Defense Health Agency," outgoing DHA Director Lt. Gen. Douglas Robb, DO, MPH, told U.S. Medicine last month. "It is a marker in the sand, and I use the word 'sand,' because we are going to continue to transform, and we are going to grow and continue to mature." Robb retired this month, and Navy Vice Adm. Raquel Bono, MD, replaced him.

[More](#)

<http://www.usmedicine.com/agencies/department-of-defense-dod/outgoing-dha-chief-discusses-success-goals/>



Lt. Gen. Douglas Robb, DO, MPH

### VA's CKD Patients Lack Knowledge About Their Condition

CHICAGO - Chronic kidney disease patients at the VA have insufficient knowledge about their condition, which is associated with poorer health outcomes, according to a recent study. The report found that patients did not understand physicians' explanations and were dissatisfied with the patient-provider relationship. Study authors suggest that effective patient-provider

communication can improve CKD patients' knowledge and improve their participation in effective self-care.

 [More](#)

<http://www.usmedicine.com/agencies/department-of-veterans-affairs/vas-ckd-patients-lack-knowledge-about-their-condition/>

## From the Editor-in-Chief

**There is no higher religion than human service. To work for the common good is the greatest creed. - Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924).**



Editor-In-Chief, Chester  
"Trip" Buckenmaier III,  
MD, COL (ret.), MC, USA

Government service can be extremely trying at times. Last month, I touched on the difficulties of surviving the bureaucracy to which we submit ourselves each week in the care of our servicemembers and their families. As I have been challenged recently with seemingly nonsensical decisions on critical projects for patient care that my organization is working on, I feel further comment on this topic is warranted. We must remember, it is the patients that are the center of purpose, not successful execution of the bureaucracy. Success with one is not necessarily compatible with success in the other.  [More](#)

<http://www.usmedicine.com/editor-in-chief/there-is-no-higher-religion-than-human-service/>