



(March 17, 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 Highlights - March Issue**  
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HIGHLIGHTS

U.S. MEDICINE NEWS UPDATE

[VA Seeks More Flexible Work Period Requirement for Healthcare Staff](#)

WASHINGTON - The VA is seeking to end what it considers an arbitrary 80-hour per federal work period requirement which complicates hospital staffing, especially in emergency departments. Making the change is critical, according to VA Secretary Robert McDonald, so that VA can be competitive with the private sector for top healthcare talent. The change would allow flexibility for medical professionals to work, for example, 100 hours in one pay period and 60 in the next. [More](#)

<http://www.usmedicine.com/agencies/department-of-veterans-affairs/va-seeks-more-flexible-work-period-requirement-for-healthcare-staff/>



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MARCH ISSUE

[Report Finds MHS Mental Healthcare Varies From Excellent to Inadequate](#)

SANTA MONICA, CA - The MHS does an excellent job following up with patients after being discharged from mental healthcare treatment but falls short in some other areas, according to a new assessment from the RAND Corp. The report, which looked at how the U.S. military cares for servicemembers with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression, found that the overwhelming majority received at least one psychotherapy visit. Among the areas of care needing improvement, however, were the number and timing of subsequent visits, which reviewers suggested could be inadequate to deliver evidence-based psychotherapy. [More](#)

<http://www.usmedicine.com/agencies/department-of-defense-dod/report-finds-mhs-mental-healthcare-varies-from-excellent-to-inadequate/>

[Civilian Healthcare Providers Need Training to Appropriately Treat Veterans](#)

BUFFALO, NY - Civilian healthcare providers need to acquire more "military/veteran cultural competence" to provide adequate care to veterans, servicemembers and their families. A new study calls for training so that healthcare systems and providers better understand military culture in order to work effectively with those patients. University of Buffalo-led researchers say their study is one of the first documenting the many difficulties facing military families in the community, especially when it comes to medical care. [More](#)

<http://www.usmedicine.com/agencies/department-of-defense-dod/civilian-healthcare-providers-need-training-to-appropriately-treat-veterans/>



Lisa Butler, PhD

[Veteran Advocates: 'Choice' Eligibility Is Too Restrictive](#)

WASHINGTON - VA should use "clinically-based access standards" to determine eligibility for community care rather than the 30-day and 40-mile eligibility standards the agency is proposing for the New Veterans Choice Program. That's what advocacy groups told a legislative subcommittee that is looking at VA's proposal to consolidate its multiple community-care programs under the umbrella of the New VCP. [More](#)

<http://www.usmedicine.com/agencies/department-of-veterans-affairs/veteran-advocates-choice-eligibility-is-too-restrictive/>

ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

[Recreational Therapist Uses Art to Help DC Veteran Patients](#)

WASHINGTON - Veterans adjusting to a disability or recovering from trauma - be it physical, mental or emotional - often feel disconnected, both from others and from their own mind or body. There is also the tunnel-vision of measuring results and the frustration of so much being out of their control. For therapists, any opportunity to help veterans feel like whole human beings in control of their lives is welcome. At the DC VA Medical Center's Recreation Therapy program, Jon Palks makes sure the arts are included in those opportunities. [More](#)

<http://www.usmedicine.com/agencies/department-of-veterans-affairs/recreational-therapist-uses-art-to-help-dc-veteran-patients/>



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