

## Commanders Corner

April 1<sup>st</sup> 2015

No, this isn't an April fool's joke! But Happy April with Easter just around the corner...

By now, those of you who have kept updated addresses and made changes known to us here, you have received our newsletter. I hope everyone enjoyed this and know that we still care about you as members. Without the members, we would not have anything. Please let us know if you enjoyed receiving it as we would like to do a couple of these a year. We would also ask that you make your e-mail available and I will send one to you. Of course, those who have tech links can view the web site for current information. Save it to your favorites:

<http://www.davmembersportal.org/chapters/oh/52/default.aspx>

**Marietta VA CBOC** will be moving to a new location sometime in the future. No definite date has been set but it is rumored to be late fall or early winter. I am sure it will be well announced in the media. The location will be at the RENO Business Park (north on Rt 7 above Marietta across from the cemetery). This is going to be a nice newly renovated facility. Stay tuned.

One thing about the VAMC from both sides of the river seems to be veterans having questions about their healthcare and not getting answers...Just like your doctor and team in the private sector, you are an important part of the healthcare you receive. No one has the right to treat you as if you don't matter and your questions/concerns aren't important. You and your family deserve to know you are receiving the best care ANYWHERE.

**As to questions about YOUR patient care records and obtaining copies**, it is your right to have access and copies on request. Have you ever been asked by your healthcare team to sign a release of information so the VAMC can get copies of your records from providers outside the VA? You and your providers outside the VA also can ask in kind. One way to access your records and view them (or download and print to share) is to sign up for My healthvet from the VA website. This is a VERY Useful program that I use as well as the ebenefits site. You should always check your records for accuracy at the visit. One veteran recently told me that he had looked at his record of a recent visit and there was '0' as reported for pain, refusing to enroll in the MOVE program, and no report of PTSD or Depression. What concerned this veteran was that he insists he was not asked about any of these areas that had been entered into his visit note by the nurse, and that the provider had affirmed these entries in his note as well. I discussed with the veteran the possibilities that these entries could affect his service connected claim and future claims/upgrade as he is a DAV member. Should he decide to go forward with a claim for PTSD and Depression, the VA-in deciding his outcome for the claim- would certainly use the fact that in his VA medical record he had denied symptoms of PTSD and Depression? As far as the '0' reported at that visit for pain, any upgrade to his injury claim could be affected as well. I am not saying this is wide spread by entering in accurate or false information, but it is concerning that this may be happening. Check your Records! You have a right to everything in your medical record.

Copied from the VA web site for you to access: <http://www.va.gov/health/rights/>

## Rights and Responsibilities

Employees must respect and support your rights as a patient. If you would like more information about your rights as a patient, please talk with your VA treatment team members or if necessary, a [Patient Advocate](#). Patient Rights and Responsibilities are posted in outpatient and inpatient areas. If you have not received a copy of your Rights and Responsibilities, please contact the Patient Advocate who can provide you with a copy or you may download a copy here.

- [Rights and Responsibilities of VA Patients and Residents of Community Living Centers](#)
- [Rights and Responsibilities of Family Members of VA Patients and Residents of CLCs](#)

Every veteran and their family or care giver has the right to ask questions. It is care that is supposed to be the best care in the WORLD. Our Veterans Healthcare is not an entitlement- which some compare to welfare. We earned it. On the following page please note the comments from the current VA Secretary in reference to our VA Healthcare.

Copied from the link: VHA Blueprint for Excellence

***VA Secretary's Perspective on Mission & Values as Secretary Robert A. McDonald said in his inaugural address to all VA staff:*** No organization can succeed without values to match its mission. Our mission, as the Department of Veterans Affairs, is to care for those 'who shall have borne the battle' and for their families and survivors. Our core values focus our minds on our mission of caring and thereby guide our actions toward service to others. These values — Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence — define our culture and strengthen our dedication to those we serve. Our commitment to serving Veterans must be unquestioned. Veterans must know that we are 'all in' when it comes to accomplishing our mission and living by our values.

So don't take "That is just the way it is here at the VA" for an answer when it comes to your healthcare.

Here are some tips to remember for resolving issues with your healthcare team and unanswered questions:

The first step is to ask the provider to discuss your healthcare concerns. Provider means "Whoever is giving you care at that time in question." This could be the Clerk, Nurse, Doctor, or technician and so forth. For instance, you have a lab appointment for blood draw before seeing the provider. You have a right to ask what the tests are for. Much the same, if the provider tells you at the visit that he is going to change your medicine, he/she is duty bound to tell you why and how it will benefit you. The answer that "It is cheaper and the VA says this is all you get" is not the right answer.

If they cannot resolve to answer your question or give adequate explanation, the next step will be to request to see that person's supervisor or representative. The VA is a government entity. I guarantee you that everyone at the VA from top to bottom has someone they report to. Don't take "the buck stops here" from anyone.

If that person has not given your concerns adequate attention and satisfied your inquiry, every VA Medical Center in the United States has a Patient Advocate.

Copied from: <http://www.va.gov/health/patientadvocate/>

## Patient Advocate

The Patient Advocacy Program is for all veterans and their families who receive care at Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities and clinics. We want to be sure you have someone to go to with your concerns in a timely manner and to help you receive care.

If you need help getting care or getting your problems resolved, talk to the Patient Advocate at your [VA Medical Center](#). We want to provide you with world-class veteran customer service and this is just one important way in which we do that!

So you see, if you don't believe your concerns have been addressed without prejudice, you have another option available. Below and on the next page is the numbers in the two area VAMC's to contact the Patient Advocate-

### Patient Advocate Phone Numbers:

#### Clarksburg-

Patient Advocate	Room 1240	304-623-3461 Ext. 3931 800-733-0512 Ext. 3931
------------------	-----------	--

#### Chillicothe

Patient Advocates	Building 31, Ground floor Rooms G-141, G-125 and G-126	740-773-1141 Ext. 7945/6107/6345 740-773-1141 Ext. 7459/6715
-------------------	---	--

**At some time after your visit, you may receive a questionnaire from your VAMC asking about your visit and care. Please don't toss these in the trash. Fill them out the best you can and return them. Your answers may improve your future care and that of other veterans.**

**Should you call the Patient advocate make sure you get the name of the person you talk with. Names and date are important. If you call and are asked to leave a message, be sure to leave a good time and accurate phone number to be reached, make sure you note the time and day the message was left. If after 24 to 48 hours you call a second time and wait for another call back that doesn't come- then you may need to leave the next message stating "If I don't deserve to be called back after repeated messages then perhaps I should call my Congressional Representative." I assure you, if no one calls you back then you should do just that!**

**I hope this proves helpful to anyone out there with concerns about the healthcare they receive.**

**Send me your questions and I will try to find your answer**

