Fayetteville VA Medical Center
Community Update

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New associate director excited about joining team

While he sees challenges facing the Fayetteville VA Medical Center, the new associate director for operations says he's excited about being part of the team he thinks will be leading the center through some big changes.

James Galkowski joined the team Sept. 12 after a career that found him working in private practice and, most recently, at the Durham VA Medical Center. The physician assistant comes to Fayetteville after nine years in Durham, most recently as associate chief of Ambulatory Care Services. He is the second permanent member of the leadership team to come onboard after almost a year of having interim associate directors.

As associate director, Galkowski is charged with overseeing the day-to-day operations of the facility – all the things that make the health care system here function, he said. Comparing the center to a civilian company, Galkowski would be the chief operating officer while Center Director Elizabeth Goolsby would be the chief executive officer.

"(Goolsby) develops the strategic plan, while I execute the plan," Galkowski said.

He went on to say he had several reasons for wanting to come to Fayetteville.

"To me it's exciting to work with this team to expand our programs," Galkowski said. "To open new facilities, to deal with the growth in our patient workload, to work under good leadership. I know the VISN is going to support Fayetteville, so it's exciting joining this team." He acknowledged there were some challenges to be dealt with in Fayetteville. "Ensuring access in a growing environment will be a challenge," Galkowski said. "More people want services. We have some obvious space restraints. And we'll be working at the macro level under the federal budget restraints that are impacting all areas of the government. With the VA being the second largest government agency in manpower, we know we're going to be affected."

Change, though, is not necessarily a bad thing.

"The VA is undergoing a transformation. The change to patient aligned care team is a paradigm shift from the hospital care environment we have now," he said. "We're becoming much more Veteran-centric and patient focused. We need to ensure the customer gets what they expect from the VA."

And you can expect to see the new associate director leading the hospital staff in the charge to change.

"We have to work toward a common goal. None of this can occur without a total team effort."

New Mental Health Chief named

Dr. Prasanthi Myneni has been named as Chief, Mental Health for the Fayetteville VA Medical Center.

As chief of Mental Health Service Line, Dr. Myneni will oversee the center's mental health service operations, which provide a wide variety of programs and services both in Out Patient and In Patient settings. These include but are not limited to Compensated Work Therapy program, Chemical Addiction Rehabilitation Program, Local Recovery Program, Mental Health Intensive Case Management Program, Military Sexual Trauma program, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Program, Serving Return Combat (OEF/OIF) Veterans Program, Suicide Prevention Program. Under her guidance these programs are offered at the main medical center as well as in the three current Community Based Outpatient Clinics.

Dr. Myneni graduated from Rangaraya Medical College in Kakinada, India, and received psychiatric training in Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, N.Y. She is board certified in General Psychiatry with added qualifications in Addiction Psychiatry. She has 29 years of experience as a psychiatrist with 11 of those years served at Fayetteville VAMC as the medical director to Mental Health Service Line.

Team's success means better access for Veterans

A team formed at the Fayetteville VA Medical Center more than a year ago has seen such success with their mission of ensuring Veterans have access to high quality health care that they were recently invited to present their practices during a national training session.

The center's Clinic Utilization Team was asked to present a summary of their work and accomplishments during the National Clinic Profile Education Call Sept. 20. That system redesign project entailed reviewing appointment slots for all clinics in the medical center and deleting unused slots – slots that were available for appointments but often didn't have a provider available to see the patient.

"When we first started the project, we had 42,000 unused slots," said Jill Bullard, system redesign coordinator.

"The providers were not there to see the patients, but the slots were there," said Theo Sykes, medical administrative specialist for Health Administration Service. "If the slots were there, the clerks would book them, but if the provider isn't there, they'd have to cancel and rebook the appointment."

The team, consisting of members from Health Administration, Ambulatory Care, Decision Support System, Scheduling, Mental Health, and the Primary and Specialty Care Clinics, have already deleted 14,000 unused appointment slots since their inception in April 2009. While medical centers throughout the VA system are now looking at the same issue, Fayetteville's team was actually up and running before VA mandated it. Now that similar teams are working at VA medical centers throughout the country, the number of unused slots has been reduced from 67 million to 11 million since October 2009.

While the team is responsible for the overall plan and strategy, it took buy in from people throughout the medical center, starting with the chiefs of each service, said George Grimes, chief of the Ambulatory Care Service. With that buy in, the program moved ahead, and clinic utilization rates started increasing.

The current utilization rate for the Fayetteville VA Medical Center is 77 percent, up from 73 percent when the team began work on the project. Nationally, the clinic utilization rate has risen from 7 percent to 40 percent.

For most Veterans, the work done by the Clinic Utilization Team is invisible, but positive changes in access to care are being made.

"Now we have people calling the Veterans the night before their appointment," Sykes said. "If we find out they're going to cancel their appointment, we can put another Veteran in that slot."

While most of the team members agreed there is still work to be done, they envision further improvements in the future.

"If there is still a problem, we can see it and fix it," Sykes said.

Construction projects changing the face of FVAMC

Major construction projects that are either underway or planned for the near future will change the face of the Fayetteville VA Medical Center over the next few years.

Artist conception of the new Robeson County CBOC.

- Construction is progressing at Village Green in Fayetteville. Plans are to move several primary care clinics from the current facility into the new space by December.
- Construction is also progressing on the new Robeson County Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Pembroke. The 6,000 square foot facility will provide both primary care and mental health services for area Veterans beginning in January.
- Site selection is underway for a new Vet Center in Jacksonville. The center will provide counseling services for combat Veterans beginning late this year or early next year.
- Site selection is underway for a new Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Wayne County. The new clinic will provide primary care and mental health services in Fiscal Year 2011.
- Construction is due to start soon on a new warehouse for the Fayetteville VA Medical Center. The 9,000 square foot facility will be completed in FY 2011.
- Construction is scheduled to start within soon on the new Wilmington "Super CBOC." The 80,000+ square foot facility will provide outpatient care services currently found only at the Fayetteville facility. It is scheduled to open in FY 2012.
- Site selection is underway for a new Dialysis Center in the Fayetteville area. The new center will provide dialysis services for up to 48 Veterans who currently receive this service elsewhere in the community. The center is expected to open in early 2011.
- Several sites have been referred to the VA contracting office for the new Fayetteville Health Care Center. The 230,000+ square foot facility will house all outpatient activities for the Fayetteville VA Medical Center and will include approximately 2,000 parking spaces for patients and employees. The current building will become an inpatient facility/ community living center. The Health Care Center is scheduled to open for business in FY 2013.

FVAMC recognizes National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and the Fayetteville VA Medical Center's Women's Advisory Committee has several functions planned in recognition of it.

Each Friday in October (8th, 15th, 22nd and the 29th) there will be a Brown Bag lunch seminar held in the Navigation Room from 11 a.m.-noon.

Also there will be a table set up in the main lobby with information relating to the seminar held on that individual Friday.

There will also be a Breast Cancer Walk on October 13th on the fitness trail.

We would like for everyone on Fridays to wear PINK.

Staff members, patients and visitors are invited to attend these events.

Early detection and screenings with mammography can save lives.

In women, breast cancer is the second most common cause of cancer deaths. The numbers of deaths have declined over the last decade partly because of increased screening. The best screening test is a mammogram, essentially a breast x-ray. Mammograms are recommended for women starting at age 50. A mammogram can be performed at a VA facility, or your doctor can refer you to a nearby center for a mammogram. Breast cancer screening is an important benchmark for quality of care.

In 2008 the VA scored higher in this quality measure than non-VA facilities.

Depending on your risk factors or your physical examination, your doctor may recommend a mammogram at an earlier age.

Understanding your family and personal history of cancers is an important aspect in evaluating your risk. If you have a mother, sister, or daughter with breast cancer, ask your doctor about your risk of getting breast cancer and how you can lower your risk.

In addition, you can lower your risk of breast cancer by:

- Controlling your weight and exercise.
- Understanding the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy.
- Limiting the amount of alcohol you drink.

We encourage you to ask your provider about mammography.

Women are now the fastest growing subgroup of U.S. Veterans, with almost 5,000 currently enrolled in the Fayetteville VA Medical Center. The number of women Veterans is expected to increase dramatically in the next 10 years, and VA health care is in high demand by the women Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

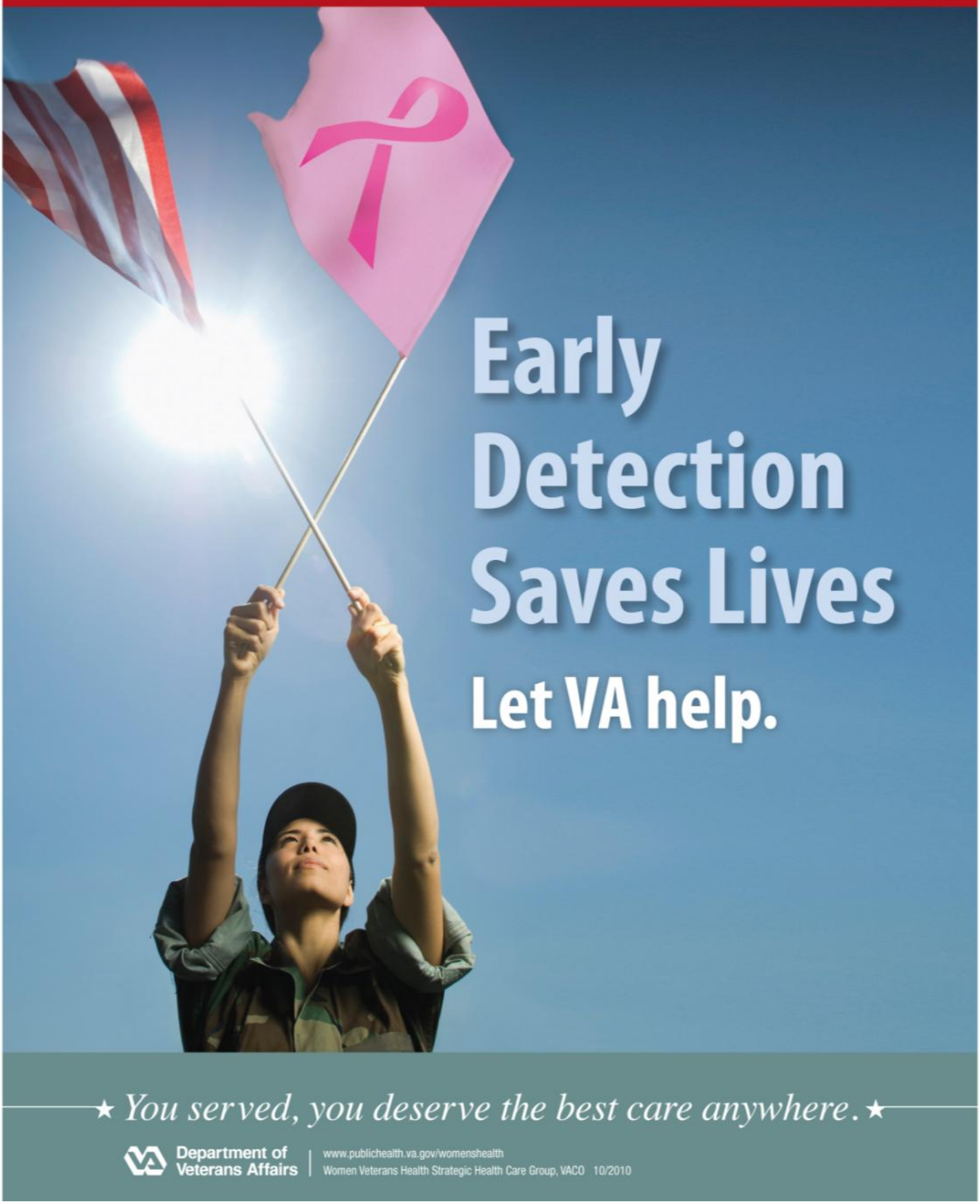
The Department of Veterans Affairs understands the health care needs of women Veterans and is committed to meeting these needs. Women Veterans served and they deserve the best quality care.

The Fayetteville VA Medical Center provides quality health care services to a growing number of women Veterans. Future plans for the Women Veterans Health Clinic include a major renovation and expansion that will take place next year.

Safe patient handling training

Fayetteville VA Medical Center staff members underwent training Sept. 21 on how to properly use patient handling equipment and procedures.

The equipment and procedures taught during the training session are used to ensure the safety and comfort of patients who may not be able to move themselves while in the hospital.

Photo by Brad Garner

WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE