

Prosthetist Restores Veterans' Confidence

Since early childhood, David Hoehn has been fascinated with making life-like characters and creatures.

"As a kid, I was always encouraged to be creative with drawing, sculpting and experimenting with different materials," says David.

The San Francisco native joined the SFVAMC Restoration Clinic in 1992 as a restoration technician.

Today, as a Board Certified Clinical Anaplastologist and Chief of SFVAMC's Restoration Clinic, David's work helps restore functionality and confidence to over 120 Veterans each year.

In his spare time, David has invented new processes and techniques to further the field of Anaplastology. He is also an eye maker for special-effects heads, aliens and creatures for over 30 films and television shows.

What do you do for Veterans?

"I create very realistic ocular (eye) and facial prosthetics, covering sometimes large defects caused by disease or injury," says David. "I essentially provide a very realistic 'patch' that fits exactly to the contours of the patient's anatomy. This can include nasal, auricular

(ear), facial, ocular and finger prosthetics, and all its variations."

"Restorative prosthetics would seem purely cosmetic, but there are functional and psychological aspects that can't be ignored," says



David Hoehn displays a model of a larger than life-size human eye.

David. "Functionally, infections are minimized due to the prosthesis acting as a barrier, protecting delicate tissues from dust and debris. It helps psychologically because the patient's confidence in public has been restored."

Are eye and facial prosthetics labor-intensive to create?

"Eyes are very complex with all their nuances in depth, anatomy and coloring," says David. "It takes about one week to make a facial prosthesis because of the detailed modeling, molding, casting, multi-layered coloration and fitting process."

Each prosthesis is custom fit from an impression and fabricated with hi-tech materials, combining science and art for lifelike results.

How long does it take for a patient to receive a custom-made eye?

"I provide a really great service for Veterans who need artificial eyes," says David. "Many people tell me it took them 3 – 6 months to have their eye made elsewhere. I usually make an eye in one day! Because the work flow is continuous and the patient is seen three times during the course of the day, nothing is overlooked." If that's inconvenient for a patient, David accommodates them by scheduling short visits on different days.

"I like to have very clear communication with the patient," says David. "I want my patients to be happy, so I always include them in the fabrication process. I tell them what I can do, what the limitations are, and what they can expect. I also instruct them on how to use the prosthetic confidently, and how to take care of it to make it long-lasting."

"I find what I do to be gratifying, because it makes people happy," says David. "It's for the Veterans. If they are happy, then I know what I've done is good."

VA Launches New Women Veterans Hotline

As part of VA's goal to implement improvements to its health care for women Veterans, there is a new, Women Veterans hotline:

855-VA-WOMEN (829-6636) - an incoming call center that receives and responds to questions from women Veterans, their families, and caregivers across America about VA services and resources.

The Women Veterans Call Center is open Mon. - Fri. 5 a.m. - 7 p.m. (Pacific) and Sat. 5 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. (Pacific) to increase women Veterans' knowledge of all VA services and benefits that they

deserve. The operators are VA employees who are well-informed about eligibility, benefits, health care and other services, and can route calls within VA when needed. They can also respond to crisis situations such as suicidal behavior, homelessness, sexual trauma, and domestic violence.

"The Call Center is just another way the VA is reaching out to help meet the unique needs of women Veterans--by delivering the highest quality of health care and information to each woman," says Denise Bartlett, MSN, FNP-BC,

SFVAMC Women Veterans Program Manager.

SFVAMC Women's Health Center/Clinic offers comprehensive women's primary care including gender-specific care, mental health, social work, and gynecology.

The SFVAMC Women's Health Center/Clinic is located in Bldg. 203, 1st Floor, Suite 1B. Call (415) 750-2174 for an appointment. All six of our community based outpatient clinics have designated women's health primary care providers and teams to meet women Veterans' health needs.

Fun Therapy for Community Living Center Residents

The Snoezelen® has arrived at the San Francisco VA Medical Center's (SFVAMC) Community Living Center (CLC). It's more than just new therapy equipment; it is a safe, fun, multi-sensory environment in which all CLC residents may explore for motivation, encouragement, pain reduction, anger management, stress relief, or just for recreational enjoyment and pleasure.

The system employs special lighting, visual projections, colorful bubbling water, sounds, music, vibrations, and tactile surfaces that adapt to the specific needs and preferences of a patient at the time of use.

"Staff have been trained in its use, and are delighted and looking

forward to employing the unique therapy for our patients," says CLC Geropsychologist Elizabeth Sutherland, PsyD.

"The cart includes numerous components that can be personally tailored to the needs of each of our residents. We plan to create index cards for each resident to record what they like and prefer when engaging in this therapeutic environment," says Dr. Sutherland.

The Snoezelen® has been used widely in education and care settings such as: for patients with disabilities, children with autism, elderly with dementia, mental illness, PTSD, chronic pain, challenging behaviors, acquired brain injury, to calm in childbirth, and more.



SFVAMC's CLC Geropsychologist Elizabeth Sutherland, PsyD (left) and psychology extern Kelly Stapenhorst demonstrate Snoezelen® therapy equipment for CLC residents.

