

Veteran Updates

News and updates on Veterans issues from the San Francisco VA Health Care System • June 2015

VA Holds Innovative Competition to Enhance Quality of Life for Vets

Can you imagine losing the ability to use everyday objects like your phone, typing on a computer or even enjoying a beloved hobby like photography? These are just a few of the challenges that Veterans and civilians with disabilities such as amputations and tremors face every day – and these are the challenges the VA wants to help solve.

VA invites all designers, engineers, and problem-solvers alike, to help us find creative ways to solve these challenges.

The VA Innovation Creation Series for Prosthetics and Assistive Technologies aims to accelerate the development of personalized technologies to improve care and quality of life for Veterans. The innovations that come out of this challenge will benefit the Veterans we care for and will be open source to help advance American medicine.

Some of the challenges VA is looking for the public's help to solve are:

- Develop novel upper and lower extremity devices at the end of prosthesis for daily use.
- Create a medication pillbox that allows the flexibility to hold

medications that need to be taken up to 8 times a day with a reminder system for each time medication needs to be taken.

- Create a device that can dampen tremors when someone is performing fine motor tasks.
- Design a device to remotely change the speed and grip strength of a prosthetic device for our Veterans with upper extremity injuries.
- Create a way to reassign motions and buttons on gaming controllers to provide alternative access for Veterans who are using them in therapy to improve eye hand coordination, fine motor control and/or range of motion.



This is a call to all solvers to submit their ideas. The VA Innovation Creation Series will accept proposed solutions submitted to www.innovation.va.gov/challenge/ through the end of June.

The Series will culminate in a two-day "Make-a-thon" event at Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond, VA, July 28-29, where the designs submitted by the public online will be built and tested to showcase how they could meet the needs of Veterans.

Patient Safety

June is National Safety Month, and the VA would like you to become part of our patient safety team. To do this, you should be fully informed and actively involved in your own health care.

How can you become involved in patient safety?

- Provide your VA health care team detailed information about your condition.
- Clearly understand your diagnosis and treatment plan and know what to expect. Speak with your providers about the medications you'll need and when you need to take them. Ensure you have contact information for your providers if you have further questions once you get home. If you need clarification or want to vary your treatment plan, please tell us. We'll listen.
- Keep your VA health care team informed of any changes in your condition, good or bad, such as an allergic reaction to a drug.
- Speak up when you have a question about any aspect of your care.

Your active involvement will help us consistently do the right thing at the right time for the right person — you!

Veteran Kudos

“The San Francisco VA Medical Center has been fantastic. I haven’t received better or more caring service anywhere, military or not.” –D.C.

“I have known for years now that this is the finest VA facility in the country. I have been to other VAs throughout the country and have never been happy until coming home to the SFVAMC.” - S.T.

*“Mrs. Jamie Ellison is an RN with great bedside manners. She made me feel secure and safe... When Ms. Venice Laquian would check on the patient next to me, she would take the time to ask if I needed anything. I think this truly shows her work ethics and professionalism ... The care I received from Mrs. Herissa Ching while being a patient here at San Francisco was excellent, caring, professional, courteous, compassionate, thoughtful, kind, attentive, and I was made to feel like a very important individual. These words pale in comparison to how I was taken care of.”
– D.R.G.*

“Excellence in service, and acts of kindness & passion for providing the BEST nursing care anywhere is what my nurse, Kristin Weaver, has been providing me for years now, and my thanks can never repay her. She has my respect, loyalty, admiration and my unending prayers in gratitude. -S.U.

Take the Test - Take Control

National HIV Testing Day (June 27) is an annual campaign coordinated by the National Association of People with AIDS to encourage people of all ages to “Take the Test, Take Control.”

Early HIV diagnosis is critical, so people who are infected can fully benefit from available life-saving treatments. Those most affected by HIV are gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men; and people who share needles, syringes, rinse water or other equipment used to prepare injection drugs, with someone who has HIV.

Currently, almost 40 percent of people with HIV are not diagnosed until they already have developed AIDS. That can be up to 10 years after they first became infected with HIV. Finding out whether you are infected with HIV is the first step to improving your health and

the health of your partners and your family. Talk with your VA provider about how you can take the test for HIV.

“HIV” stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV is a lot like other viruses, such as those that cause the flu or the common cold. The difference is, once you have HIV, you have it for life. It attacks a key part of your immune system (your T-cells). T-cells are needed to fight infections and disease, but HIV invades them, uses them to make more copies of itself, and then destroys them.

Today, a person who is diagnosed with HIV and treated before the disease is far advanced can have a nearly normal life expectancy. No safe and effective cure for HIV currently exists, but scientists are working hard to find one, and remain hopeful.

Resources for Veterans

National VA Phone Numbers:

VA Benefits/Claims

(800) 827-1000

Education (GI Bill)

(888) 442-4551

Health Care Benefits

(877) 222-8387

Veterans Crisis Line

(800) 273-8255 (Press #1)

Women Veterans Call Center

(855) 829-6636

SFVAHCS Phone Numbers:

Billing Office

(866) 347-2353

Mental Health/Substance Abuse

(415) 750-6674

OEF/OIF/OND Program

(415) 221-4810, ext. 2647

Pharmacy (Auto Refill)

(415) 750-2233

Patient Experience Specialist

(415) 750-6650

Telephone Linked Care

(800) 733-0502

