CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

Wilkes-Barre Activates Expanded Emergency Department: In December, Wilkes-Barre activated the newly expanded Emergency Department. Under the project, roughly 15,000 sq. ft. of existing space was renovated to increase the service offerings and efficiencies of the department. The new unit includes 11 private, monitored exam rooms, with two isolation rooms, a Bariatric Room, a Women’s Health Room, and a Resuscitation Room. The new unit is also equipped with a specialized Behavioral Health Room and two Fast Track Rooms for the improved care delivery. The modern space will facilitate the revision of care delivery modalities to increase the efficiency at which services are provided to our Veterans. The new unit is anticipated to greatly reduce wait times, while increasing the overall experience for the Veterans seeking care.

Parking Garage still ‘on Deck’ Wilkes-Barre’s Parking Garage is slated to be announced for construction bids in Q1 2019. It’s been a long process, but we’re still plugging away with ground breaking scheduled for 2019!

Feature Story

Changing Mental Health Care Delivery for Our Women Veterans

In 2018, Wilkes-Barre’s Sandy Rowlands, LCSW, was invited to join the Women’s Mental Health Mini-Residency Planning Committee. The committee, represented a multi-agency collaboration, was charged with the curriculum development for a VA/DOD Women’s Mental Health Mini-Residency Program. As a planning committee member, Ms. Rowlands served as a subject matter expert contributing to the professional and educational development of VA Mental Health Clinicians across the country, to assure that all our Women Veterans receive the most effective gender-specific care possible.

“Women Veterans are the fastest growing segment of the Veteran population. I’m proud of the program we’ve built at Wilkes-Barre and the service we’re able to share with our neighboring facilities.” – Dr. Sumit Ghosh

As early as the mid-1600s, our Nation’s leaders recognized the burdens borne by the men and women of our armed forces resulting in the establishment of today’s Veterans Health Administration to serve those who so proudly served the nation. Although many of the organizations’ medical centers were established during the Civil War, Wilkes-Barre’s history is a bit unique.

The Wyoming Valley Chamber of Commerce petitioned the VA to consider Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania as a site for the establishment of a Veterans Affairs Medical Center in 1944. In 1945, when authorization was received for a hospital in Wilkes-Barre, a site was selected and a coalition of Community Partners established a campaign to raise the funds necessary to purchase the land on which the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center would be constructed.

In 1946, the land was secured and the Board of Trustees of the Wilkes-Barre and Wyoming Valley Veterans Hospital Fund was established to manage the excess funds raised by the community. These funds were invested and designated to be used for entertainment, education, recreation, and supplies to promote the moral and physical welfare and rehabilitation of Veterans served at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center.

Although the membership of the Board of Trustees has changed over the years, their mission to enrich the lives of Veterans served at the Medical Center has remained a constant. For all the daily freedoms that we enjoy, I say thank you to our Veterans. For helping to support our Veterans, I thank all our Community Partners.

JUDGEMENT, EMBARRASSMENT OR THEIR SURROUNDINGS. By opening this door to Women Veterans, they have been able to heal wounds that have been open for so long. We have received nothing but gratitude and positive feedback.” – LoriAnn Manfre-Conahan, PA-C Women’s Health PACT Team

FROM THE VETERAN…

“For me it’s easier now. The triggers aren’t there and I can focus on my sessions because I feel safer. I see the same friendly faces and it’s consistent. I NEED THAT!” – Kim

“I feel more at ease in the Women’s Health Clinic. I can get everything I need for my medical issues and my mental health all in one place. I’m comfortable there.” – Linda

LoriAnn Manfre-Conahan, PA-C Women Veterans Program Manager

The Women’s Health Clinic, along with the Women’s Health Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT), has greatly increased the satisfaction of Women Veterans served at Wilkes-Barre. They have been very complimentary of the care they receive, as well as the private environment provided.

Pat Conroy, LCSW, CASAC, Women Veterans Program Manager

Men are sometimes afraid to seek help because of fear of judgment, embarrassment or their surroundings. By opening this door to Women Veterans, they have been able to heal wounds that have been open for so long. We have received nothing but gratitude and positive feedback.” – LoriAnn Manfre-Conahan, PA-C Women’s Health PACT Team

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Wilkes-Barre’s Call Center: Growing Pains to a National Leader

The VA Medical Center in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, established a Centralized Call Center in 2015, which went into full operation in February of 2016. At first, Veterans were a bit skeptical, but the transition to the Centralized Call Center rolled out fairly smoothly across Wilkes-Barre’s sites of care. There were growing pains along the way, but processes were adjusted as needed and we have been able to exceed the established operational thresholds.

Veterans who call either 1-877-928-2621 (ext. 2) or 570-824-3321 (ext. 2) between the hours of 7:30 am - 4:30 pm, Monday-Friday are automatically routed to the Centralized Call Center. The Call Center provides a functional bridge between Veterans and their health care teams.

Staff at the call center can help Veterans with scheduling and canceling appointments, processing medication refills and redirecting calls to the proper destination. They also enter administrative notes within Veterans’ medical records, and relay care-related messages to Patient Aligned Care Teams.

Amendment Requests

Is there something in your medical record you don’t agree with, or that you believe to be inaccurate? Would you like to have it changed? Your Wilkes-Barre VAMC Privacy Team can assist you with this process.

Amendment Requests must be submitted in writing, signed, and contain a concise description of the information believed to be inaccurate, incomplete, irrelevant, or untimely. In your request, be sure to clearly explain the reason for your disagreement.

Most requests are resolved within 30 workdays. If approved, you will be provided a copy of the amended record. If disapproved, you will be provided an explanation of why the request was denied and advised on your appeal rights.

Our team, Facility Privacy Officer, Mr. Carmen Perone (Carmen.Perone@va.gov) and Ms. Wendy Kaminski (Wendy.Kaminski@va.gov) can assist you in filing a request. Please don’t hesitate to contact them, by email or phone, should you have any concerns or questions.

Wilkes-Barre’s Logistics Management Service began stocking a select group of assistive devices, which can be issued to the Veterans on the same day as their scheduled visit. The same day provision of items such as braces/sleeves, canes/walkers, and soft/hard cervical collars and back braces not only provides for the efficient delivery of care, but also increases Veteran satisfaction while reducing overhead costs associated with program administration and shipping.

Although the issuance of same day devices is available at the Medical Center and all Wilkes-Barre’s Community Based Outpatient Clinics, items may vary by site due to storage constraints. Wilkes-Barre continues working to expand the products available to the Veterans on a same-day basis to assure that our Veterans receive convenient and timely access to the care.

Logistics/Prosthetics Service Adjusts Processes for Improved Timeliness

Wilkes-Barre’s Logistics Management Service, which includes both Logistics and Prosthetic Services, is responsible for the Supply Program at the Medical Center. Generally, Logistics is responsible for the purchase, receipt, storage and distribution of supplies and equipment; with Prosthetics supporting the provision of items to Veterans, as ordered by their physicians.

Recently, Wilkes-Barre Logistics Management Service began stocking a select group of assistive devices, which can be issued to the Veterans on the same day as their scheduled visit. The same day provision of items such as braces/sleeves, canes/walkers, and soft/hard cervical collars and back braces not only provides for the efficient delivery of care, but also increases Veteran satisfaction while reducing overhead costs associated with program administration and shipping.

Growing Pains to a National Leader

Wilkes-Barre’s Centralized Call Center is currently Ranked #1 in the nation! We’ve consistently maintained a Top 10 Ranking, having a positive impact on Veteran satisfaction and their access to care.

The Wilkes-Barre Dental Clinic is continuing to explore the use of custom implant overdentures as a treatment option for patients who are unable to wear a traditional complete denture. Preliminary use has shown very promising results and efficient and convenient delivery of care for our Veterans.

With over 25 units installed to date, the results have been adequate bone structure for stability and the ability to fabricate a custom overdenture. The technique is indicated for patients who have good quality bone in the posterior mandible and/or maxilla and are seeking an alternative to the traditional complete denture. We are happy to partner with our private practice for this service.

A new denture fabrication technique was recently piloted. After the visit:

- Dr. Jeffery Manzo
- Richard Della Croce
- Wendy Kaminski
- Carmen Perone
- Mr. Anthony Filo
- Mr. John Vanderwell
- Lynda Kline
- Mr. John Fagan
- Wendy Kaminski
- Carmen Perone
- U.S. Army
- U.S. Navy
- U.S. Air Force
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center

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Wilkes-Barre’s Call Center: Improved Timeliness

Processes for Service Adjusts

Logistics/Prosthetics

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Chief, Dental

Dr. Jeffery Manzo

Wilkes-Barre’s Dental Clinic is continuing to explore outstanding.

Mr. John Vanderwell, a Vietnam Veteran, presented to the dental clinic after receiving an ill-fitting set of dentures several months prior. Lynda stated she was not able to eat and was ashamed to be seen in public. A one day denture was fabricated and he was able to be treated on the transport litter in an reclined position for patient safety. The onsite oral surgeon removed his old set of dentures and fabricated a denture during the same visit! The patient/his family were spared the inconvenience of several trips to the medical center. Both Mr. Vanderwell and his wife, Amelia, were very pleased with overall experience.

Mr. Anthony Filo

A one day denture was fabricated and he was able to manage his new smile.

Help Us Serve You Better

Participate in Our Survey!

The Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Wilkes-Barre and all its Community Based Outpatient Clinics, began sending out electronic surveys in April of 2018. If you’re chosen to complete a survey regarding your outpatient service experience, such as scheduling, pharmacy, lab, imaging and primary/specialty care appointments, you’ll receive an email or text inviting you to the survey. Although your response is voluntary, we’d appreciate the feedback. We need to know what we’re doing well and what requires additional attention.

THE SURVEY FOCUSES ON:

Before the visit: “I got an appointment when I needed it”

Arriving at the facility: “It was easy to find where to go for my appointment”

During the appointment “I felt heard and cared for”

Departing the facility: “It was easy to get my prescriptions filled”

After the visit: “I understood what I needed to do next to manage my whole health”

Visit Denture Pilots Single Visit Denture Fabrication

In Fiscal Year 18, the Wilkes Barre Dental Clinic began a pilot of a new denture fabrication technique which allowed for the delivery of a full set of dentures from one office visit. The appointment, which lasts approximately 2 hours, begins with an exam to screen for any pathology and confirm the patient is a good candidate for the technique. Basic criteria for fabrication includes adequate bone structure for stability and the ability to follow simple instructions during fabrication. Once identified as a candidate, a prefabricated denture is custom molded to the patient’s mouth with the prosthesis fully functional at the conclusion of the visit. With over 25 units installed to date, the results have been outstanding.

The Wilkes-Barre Dental Clinic is continuing to explore options for utilization of one-day dentures for the efficient and convenient delivery of care for our Veterans. Preliminary use has shown very promising results and will continue to be part of our available treatment options in the future.

Contact Us!
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~ Dr. Sumit Ghosh

“Wilkes-Barre’s integration of Mental Health Services directly into the Women’s Clinic affords women Veterans the opportunity to receive gender-sensitive Mental Health treatment in the Women’s Health Clinic, fostering a more convenient and comforting atmosphere of care.”

~ Sandy Rowlands, LCSW

“Providing mental health services in the Women’s Health Clinic has helped to identify and provide care to Women Veterans who have gone without seeking help due to fear of judgement, embarrassment or their surroundings. By opening this door to Women Veterans, they have been able to heal wounds that have been open for so long. We have received nothing but gratitude and positive feedback.”

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