As I awoke to a FaceTime request from my 4 year old grandson on a Saturday morning, I couldn’t help but think back about his mother at roughly the same age. She didn’t have a smartphone back then, but she’d just as eagerly call her grandparents with the push button phone that hung on the wall in our kitchen. I’m sure she’d still remember those old push button phones, but probably not the rotary phones that my generation used as children.

In today’s world, where we’re all so ‘dialed in’ to instantaneous communication, the phone seemed an appropriate metaphor for change. Just as advancements in communication technologies transformed the rotary phone into the smart phone, they have also impacted the delivery of healthcare to our Veterans.

On March 20, 2018, the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center successfully utilized the VA Video Connect Application to complete a clinical appointment with a Veteran utilizing his smartphone from an off-site location. The appointment proved very convenient for the Veteran receiving care, and the provider was able to administer care just as effectively as with a traditional face-to-face appointment.

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The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center is proud to announce that our Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory received approval from the Office of the Under Secretary for Health, Washington D.C. to begin a Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PCI) Program.

The PCI Program, which performed its first case at Wilkes-Barre in April of 2018, is a new service offering at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center. The PCI Program, which includes stenting, expands the comprehensive cardiac care available for Veterans receiving care in Wilkes-Barre, as well as across VISN 4.

The stenting process, or coronary angioplasty, involves the utilization of a balloon catheter to expand a blocked artery and implant a small mesh-like tube (stent) in the artery to increase blood flow and reduce the risk of heart attack or muscle damage due to blockage.

Recovery from coronary angioplasty is much quicker than recovery from bypass surgery (open heart surgery), with a vast majority of Veterans able to be discharged to home the morning after the procedure.

At Wilkes-Barre, many of our procedures can be performed radially (via the wrist), as opposed to the traditional distal (via the groin) catheter insertion, which also significantly reduces recovery time while allowing Veterans to ambulate freely post procedure without the need for hours of restrictive bed rest.

The ability to offer these services in Wilkes-Barre’s state of the art Catheterization Suite is affording Veterans comprehensive cardiac services in an environment which is familiar and close to home, with their loved ones by their side to offer support.

The team of cardiologists, registered nurses, and technologists at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center are skilled in all elements of catheterization care. We take pride in providing holistic, Veteran-centric care that is second to none. We’re proud to be able to offer these expanded services to the men and women we serve.

By continuing to expand the services offered at the Wilkes Barre VA Medical Center, we’re assuring that Veterans receive safe, reliable and highly effective care in the most convenient manner possible for the Veteran and their family members.

Dr. Nabeela Mian,
Associate Chief of Staff, Medical Service
Expanding Access through Virtual Technologies

Amazon, Alexa, Uber, 3-D printers and the Cloud are just a few examples of how technological advancements have resulted in the development of applications that impact our daily lives. Healthcare is not exempt from the impacts of technology.

It is the goal of Wilkes-Barre’s Connected Care Program to continually increase a Veteran’s access to healthcare by extending services beyond the traditional office visit through the utilization of the latest virtual care delivery technologies.

Year to date (FY18), Wilkes-Barre has had in excess of 7500 virtual care encounters and demand continues to increase as Veterans become more comfortable with virtual care modalities.

Wilkes-Barre recently distributed 150 iPads to providers and nurses in order to facilitate the use of VA Video Connect and Video on Demand appointments, allowing Veterans to be seen remotely as their schedules allow. Virtual care is increasing the convenience of receiving care which is increasing patient satisfaction, while reducing no-show rates due to factors such as inclement weather, transportation, work and family schedules.

CLC Cultural Transformation

Nutrition and Food Services (NFS) has made great strides in food service to make our Community Living Center (CLC) more “home-like”.

Food Service engages with CLC residents participating in a monthly “Food-Service Focused Resident Council” meeting encouraging a partnership in change. Residents convey feedback and submit menu suggestions/requests. NFS Cooks prepare a special taste-testing to trial a new menu item that is added to the menu based on reviews.

One highlight from these meetings was an Eggstravaganza event. Residents are invited into the CLC dining room or orders are taken at bedside for a specialty breakfast meal. The event includes “made-to-order” eggs and “build-your-own” omelets prepared in the dining room by our Food Service cooks. The meal includes side choices of fresh toast, breakfast meats and beverages. This event was positively recognized by the Long Term Care Institute (LTCI) inspection in April 2017. Based on overwhelming feedback and patient satisfaction, NFS hosts this event for all residents monthly. Veterans enjoy the social aspect of the event as well, the smells coming from the dining room encourages residents to join in.

The Last Roll Call

The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center held its 11th Annual Ceremony of Remembrance in June. The ceremony, which served as one Last Roll Call, honored the memory and provided a moment of support to the loved ones of Veterans lost at the medical center throughout the year. As is tradition, the ceremony closed with a butterfly release, not all of which chose to immediately fly away. Perhaps, they too, were taking a moment to pay their last respects.
All too often, we take advantage of the little things in life. Taking a vacation, a long weekend, a last minute drive or running out to dinner on a moment’s notice, we’ve all done it. It’s an escape from work for a few days or just a reason to get out of the house.

For the Veterans residing in Wilkes-Barre’s Community Living Center, disengaging from the daily routine can be a challenge. Wilkes-Barre recognizes the importance of social and emotional well-being as a determining factor in quality of life. By developing and reinforcing an environment of personalized, proactive activities, we are engaging our residents to take charge of their health and well-being to live their lives to the fullest.

At Wilkes-Barre, it’s not only doctors and nurses interacting with patients, but a wide variety of staff and Veteran Service Organizations. There are bingos, casino nights, movies, bowling, baseball and hockey games. There are specialized holiday events, wheelchair games and talent competitions, but we’re always looking to do more to engage the men and women who call our Community Living Center home.

Since partnering with the Residents of the Community Living Center to institute the Food Service Residents Council, Wilkes-Barre’s Nutrition and Food Services has significantly enhanced the “home-like” dining experience for the Veterans residing in Wilkes-Barre’s Community Living Center.

The monthly “Eggs-travaganza Event” has been a huge success, featuring “made-to-order” eggs and “build-your-own” omelets, with all the breakfast accompaniments, prepared in the dining room by Nutrition and Food Service. For those that are unable to attend the gathering, orders are taken at the bedside for a specialty breakfast. Veteran feedback has been overwhelming and the event was recognized by the Long Term Care Institute during our last survey. Mr. Owens, an Army Special Forces Veteran, says that “they’re the best eggs ever,” but Paola Montross, Chief Nutrition and Food Service, is just glad that the Residents enjoy the meal as much as the socialization.

And since Veterans cannot survive on eggs alone, Nutrition and Food Service is also offering restaurant-style dining, special holiday meals with meat carving stations, seasonal menus, sandwich bars, specialty pizza, and, on occasion, scratch made, hand decorated desserts.

Wilkes-Barre’s Nutrition and Food Service is bringing home cooking to those who call our Community Living Center home.

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Cook Supervisor & Volunteer Cake Creator Extraordinaire, Joseph Richie prides himself on making birthdays special in the CLC! Residents are provided an individually selected meal and personalized cake to share amongst family and friends during their celebration.
Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center
1111 East End Blvd. • Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711
570-824-3521 | 877-928-2621

Allentown Community Based Outpatient Clinic
3110 Hamilton Blvd • Allentown, PA 18103
610-776-4304

Northampton County Community Based Outpatient Clinic
701 Slate Belt Blvd • Bangor, PA 18013-9341
610-599-0127

Columbia County Community Based Outpatient Clinic
301 West Third Street • Berwick, PA 18603
570-759-0351

Sayre Community Based Outpatient Clinic
1537 Elmira Street • Sayre, PA 18840
570-888-6803

Tobyhanna Community Based Outpatient Clinic
Tobyhanna Army Depot - Building 220 • Tobyhanna, PA 18466
570-615-8341

Wayne County Community Based Outpatient Clinic
600 Maple Ave • Suite 2 • Honesdale, PA 18431
570-251-6543

Williamsport Community Based Outpatient Clinic
1705 Warren Ave. 3rd Floor • Suite 304 • Williamsport, PA 17701
570-322-4791

Find us on the web, or Facebook at:
wilkes-barre.va.gov
facebook.com/VAWilkesBarre

Wilkes-Barre's Emergency Room Expansion Project is slated for completion in July of 2018. The New Emergency Department, which doubles the size of the previous unit, includes 11 monitored exam rooms and 2 fast track rooms for the increased efficiency of care delivery.

Wilkes-Barre is currently undergoing renovations for the generation of a new Canteen and Retail Store, which is anticipated to open in February 2019. The project, which involves the renovation of approximately 1200 square feet of existing space within the medical center, will provide a modern and improved dining and shopping experience for Veterans, family members and staff, while increasing the available on-station amenities for our Community Living Center Residents.