It’s not our choice, it’s our MISSION to honor America’s Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

In my years with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), I’ve witnessed many changes. Despite varied levels of success, all changes were implemented with the intention of assuring the provision of safe, reliable care to our Veterans. Our approach may have changed over the years, but not our MISSION.

In June of 2018, the Veterans Affairs Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks (MISSION) Act was signed into law. Although the MISSION Act impacts several organizational processes, it is primarily a means of streamlining Community Care Programs to assure that Veterans receive safe, reliable health care in a convenient and efficient manner.

In addition to consolidating the VA’s Community Care Programs, the MISSION Act also expands the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers, provides VA with the flexibility to align its infrastructure footprint to the needs of the Veteran, and strengthens VA’s ability to recruit and retain quality healthcare providers.

As the implementation of the MISSION Act progresses, I’m sure some challenges will arise. However, I’m also confident that this legislation will empower employees to enhance the care opportunities that we are able to offer our Veterans, thus increasing their overall satisfaction with VA.

At Wilkes-Barre, we’re all committed to our MISSION of honoring America’s Veterans through the provision of exceptional health care. Our MISSION hasn’t changed, we’re just adjusting our strategies to assure that we are meeting the Veteran where they are, with the right care at the right place and at the right time.

The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center is excited to announce the addition of telemetry beds on the 4 East Medical-Surgical Inpatient Ward.

Telemetry beds, which allow for the remote monitoring of heart rate, breathing and other critical elements of care, afford patients continuous cardiac monitoring without requiring transition to a Progressive Care Unit (PCU) or Intensive Care Unit (ICU) bed.

As an intermediate level of care, telemetry beds increase the efficiency with which we deliver care by promoting efficient bed management, while still maintaining the comprehensive delivery of quality care by our multidisciplinary team of professionals.

Telemetry beds allow us increased flexibility to tailor the acute care provided by enhancing capabilities directly on the ward, which results in less movement of the Veteran within the hospital and fewer transfers to community hospitals.

Acute care has always been provided at Wilkes-Barre. Although the addition of the telemetry beds has enhanced our ability to monitor our patients, it’s not a significant change in the provision of care. What it does is increase the efficiency with which care is delivered, which has a significant impact on convenience and overall satisfaction for the Veteran.

For the Veteran, the addition of the telemetry capabilities on the ward increases the convenience of care by enabling us to provide the acute care that they require, without the inconvenience of being transferred between various wards within the medical center.
An Attractive Option for Some Veterans

Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) is a non-invasive procedure which utilizes magnetic fields to painlessly induce electrical current across focused areas of the brain for mood regulation. A relatively new technology, the Food and Drug Administration approved TMS as a treatment modality for patients with major depressive disorder in 2008. TMS is indicated for patients who have not responded well to standard treatments such as psychotherapy or are unable to tolerate antidepressant medications.

TMS is generally well-tolerated by patients and is associated with minimal side-effects. The most common side-effect is headaches which are typically mild and lessen over the course of treatment. Other common side effects include scalp discomfort and/or facial twitching, both of which also tend to diminish during treatment and can be lessened through adjustment of position and stimulation settings. The most serious risk of TMS is seizure, however this risk is exceedingly low due to strict adherence to safety guidelines and procedures.

Much like an MRI, TMS uses magnetic pulses which produce loud, clicking noises, so patients are asked to wear ear plugs for hearing protection and comfort. Patients are placed in a reclining position with the TMS coil positioned over the scalp and several pulses are administered to gauge the patient’s motor threshold in efforts to personalize treatment. Once an appropriate stimulus level is determined, the coil is positioned over the front region of the brain. A physician actively monitors nerve impulses and movements during the 40-minute procedure to ensure appropriate stimulation to achieve maximum benefit with minimal side effects. As with any medical procedure or treatment, TMS may not be appropriate for all patients. Veterans should speak to their providers about overall health, medical history and any contraindications to this therapy.

Wilkes-Barre is excited to add TMS Therapy as treatment option for Veterans at the Medical Center. We are currently finalizing protocols and policies and anticipate having this service available to Veterans by the end of July.

For more information about the various programs available for recently returned Servicemembers, log on to the Returning Servicemembers website at https://www.oeof.va.gov, or contact the Post-9/11 Transition and Care Management (TCM) Program Monday thru Friday between the hours of 8 am and 4:30 pm at (570) 824-3521 Ext. 24558.

To apply for VA health care benefits, including enrollment you must fill out an Application for Health Benefits, VA Form 10-10EZ. You may obtain this form by one of the following means:
- **ONLINE** - Apply online at https://www.va.gov
- **BY TELEPHONE** - Call toll-free number at 877-222-VETS (8387)
- **IN PERSON** - Complete the “Application for Health Benefits” at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center’s Enrollment & Eligibility Office located in Room AG 64, Monday thru Friday between the hours of 8 am and 4:30 pm or call (570) 824-3521 ext. 27877.
Getting the Most Out of a Shared Medical Appointment

Throughout history, groups of individuals with similar characteristics and challenges have always gravitated toward one another. The Veteran population is no exception, but unfortunately, chronic disease has become a unifying factor for many of our aging service men and women.

Chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), require patients to be active participants in their care, including the daily self-management of their symptoms. The Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT) at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, personally and proactively, provide the clinical guidance to help patients manage their disease for reduced complications and hospitalizations.

The Shared Medical Appointment, which serves as an extension of the care provided by the PACT, is a group appointment held which expands the scope of care provided to the Veteran. Although not as individualized as an appointment with the Veteran’s PACT, the Shared Medical Appointment affords the Veteran an opportunity to relate to fellow Veterans dealing with similar health issues and challenges. It affords Veterans the opportunity to learn from, motivate, support and encourage each other.

The Shared Medical Appointment is an opportunity for Wilkes-Barre to continue to enhance the provision of holistic health care our Veterans. By focusing on the Veteran, while managing the disease, we’re assuring that our Veterans are receiving the care that they require, while enjoying their best possible quality of life.

STOP THE BLEED

Stop the Bleed is a national awareness campaign and call-to-action intended to cultivate grassroots efforts that encourage bystanders to become trained, equipped, and empowered to help in a bleeding emergency before professional help arrives.

VA POLICE Engaging All Employees at the Medical Center for Your Safety

At the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, we’re very proud of our Police Service. As federally trained law enforcement officers, many of whom are combat Veterans, they provide an on-site 24/7 presence for your safety and security.

In 2019, VA Police and Security Service initiated Stop the Bleed Training for staff as a proactive approach to preparedness. You don’t have to be a Police Officer to find yourself in an unfortunate situation. By training all willing staff, we’re better prepared to render aid until trained medical professionals can respond. It never hurts to be prepared!
Human Resources Supports Veteran Patients

Human Resources Management Service (HRMS) is often overlooked when considering the provision of care at the Medical Center. Although the Service does not provide direct patient care, they perform a critical role with the recruitment, hiring and retention of the health care professionals that serve our Veterans on a daily basis.

HRMS has filled 255 positions year to date, with many new hires being Veterans themselves. Of these positions, 71% were clinical positions with the remaining 29% consisting of the support and administrative staff necessary for the safe and reliable operation of the Medical Center.

Serving our nation's Veterans is a noble and rewarding profession. If you, or someone you know is interested in joining the team at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, stop by Human Resources or check us out on our Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/VAWilkesBarre/ or on USAJobs.gov.