



VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network

Keeping Veterans at the HEART of it all

February 2010

News briefs

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CTVHCS Surgeon Honored

Central Texas Veterans HCS Associate Chief of Staff for Surgical Services Dr. Clifford Buckley recently received the Texas A&M University Health Science Center Presidential Award for Excellence in Health Care Services and Delivery. Buckley also is the VISN 17 Chief Surgical Consultant.

Veterans' Chat

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org or 1-800-273-8255 (TALK).

Veterans or their family members can remain anonymous once they enter the one-on-one chat Web site. There, they are joined by a counselor who is trained to provide information and respond to the requests and concerns of the caller.

Network News is a publication of VISN 17, the **VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network**. Contact:

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Network news

Dallas VA Medical Center achieves elite nuclear cardiology accreditation

The nuclear cardiology section of the Dallas VA Medical Center (Dallas VAMC) nuclear medicine service has achieved accreditation by the Inter-societal Commission for the Accreditation of Nuclear Medicine Laboratories (ICANL).

Nuclear cardiology involves complex imaging techniques to noninvasively detect the presence of cardiovascular disease.

The heart is evaluated both at rest and during a period of stress, which may be through exercise or pharmacologic means.

Images are acquired that allow specialty trained physicians to evaluate cardiac function and blood flow.

These exams may provide important information regarding the potential occurrence of future heart attacks.

In addition to advanced imaging equipment, nuclear cardiology testing relies on the experience and training of an entire team of physicians, nurses, and technologists, which the Dallas VAMC has been able to successfully recruit.



Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, and accurate patient evaluation and early detection of coronary blockage is a point of emphasis.

This three-year, voluntary accreditation is a marker of excellence and demonstrates the Dallas VA's commitment to quality patient care and diagnostic evaluation.

The Dallas VAMC is only the second VA in the country to achieve ICANL accreditation.

VA Study Could Establish New Standard for Preventing Surgical-Site Infections

Patients, whose surgeons use chlorhexidine-alcohol rather than povidone-iodine to cleanse their skin before surgery, are approximately 40 percent less likely to experience surgical-site infections.

In a study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* January 7, researchers from four Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers and two non-VA hospitals found preoperative cleansing of patients' skin with chlorhexidine-alcohol is superior to cleansing with povidone-iodine for pre-

venting surgical-site infection.

"The overall rate of surgical-site infection using chlorhexidine-alcohol was 9.5 percent, compared to 16.1 percent with povidone-iodine.

These findings indicate only 17 patients need to receive an optimal skin antiseptic preparation in order to prevent one infection," said Rabih O. Darouiche, M.D., principal author of the paper, staff physician at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in

see **Surgical-Site Infections**, page 2



We Have a Heart for Women

VA North Texas Health Care System

supports

Women and Heart Health

Plan to attend our Annual Fair with presentations, educational booths and staff available for questions.

*Save the Date
February 26, 2010
9:50 a.m.*



Did you know...

- Heart disease is the leading cause of death in American women?
- Women have different symptoms than men before a heart attack?
- Heart disease is mostly preventable?

Surgical-Site Infections *from p. 1*

Houston, and VA Distinguished Service Professor of Medicine and Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at Baylor College of Medicine.

“The results of this study are extremely significant since two-thirds of surgical-site infections are confined to the incision,” Darouiche said.

Despite the implementation of preoperative preventive measures, which include skin cleansing with povidone-iodine (the current standard of care practice for surgical-site antisepsis), surgical-site infection occurs in 300,000 to 500,000 of about 27 million surgery patients each year in the United States. All sites of care in the VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network currently use chlorhexidine-alcohol for surgical site skin cleansing.

The two antiseptics studied are manufactured by CareFusion, a company formed by Cardinal Health, which funded the research. Cardinal Health played no role in data collection or analysis.

For more than 30 years, VA has been a leader in conducting comparative effectiveness research (CER) — head-to-head studies that help clarify which interventions work better.



Kerrville Division Hosts 19th Annual Salute to Women Veterans

Now in its 19th year, the South Texas Veterans HCS Kerrville Division “Salute to Women Veterans” is slated for Feb. 27 at the Kathleen C. Cailloux Theatre at 910 Main Street in Kerrville.

The program starts promptly at 1 p.m. and will last until 3 p.m., and features entertainment, refreshments, health information booths, a Women Veterans Memory Quilt display and a Women Veterans Memorabilia display.

Gifts will be available to the first 150 Women Veterans to register.

Everyone welcome free of charge. For more information, contact Janeth Del Toro at 830-896-2020, ext. 12075.

Postcard Reminders Protect Veterans’ Privacy

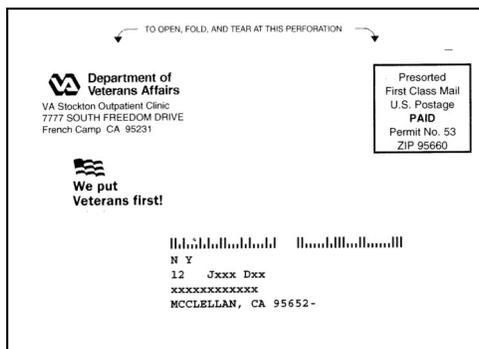
Network News reported last month that this spring will see the introduction of postcard reminders for a variety of VA clinical services.

What we failed to make clear, particularly with the example pictured in the story, is that the HIPPA-compliant postcards arrive at the Veteran’s address folded and sealed.

Each health care system will choose clinic friendly names that will protect patients’ privacy when using the appointment cards for notification.

“The information on the inside of the appointment card, printed in a shaded box that is not visible even when the sealed card is held up to the light, does not give away any sensitive information,” said Sherrie Bryant, project manager for the new initiative.

“These appointment cards are, if



Postcard reminders similar to this one are already in use by the VA in several states.

anything, better-designed to protect patient privacy than the letters we have previously used,” Bryant said.

In addition to reminders about appointments, the postcards will be used to invite Veterans to special events, deliver birthday greetings and remind Veterans of Mobile Medical Unit and fee-based appointments.

- **5:** Veterans Enrollment Fair, STHS-McAllen Heart Hospital, McAllen, TX – Lisa Killion, 956-288-3031
- **18:** Heart Health Presentation, Building 6, Waco VAMC, Waco, TX – Jana O’Leary, 254-743-2956.
- **27:** Town Hall Meeting, Bastrop County Courthouse Annex, Bastrop, TX – Joshua Bailey, 254-743-0683
- **27:** 19th Annual Salute to Women Veterans, Kerrville, TX – Barbara Hector, 210-616-8181
- **27:** San Antonio Rampage Hockey Military Night, San Antonio, TX – Genevieve Joson, 210-617-5300 x15375
- **27:** Veterans Resource Fair, Del Mar College, Corpus Christi, TX – Stacey Barrera, 361-991-0047

February Priority 8 Outreach Events