VA Video Connect Expands Veterans' Access to Health Care

More and more Veterans are receiving health-care treatment virtually, thanks to efforts by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to expand telehealth.

One of the recent successes has been with VA Video Connect, which allows Veterans to connect with their health-care teams over live video from a computer, tablet or smart phone from the comfort of their homes, thereby increasing their access to VA health care and reducing travel times.

"We are taking big steps to make VA health care more accessible," said VA Acting Secretary Robert Wilkie.

"VA Video Connect provides our Veterans with a convenient option to connect with their providers from their preferred locations in the United States."

VA Video Connect can be used on almost any computer, tablet or smart phone with an internet connection, a web camera and microphone. VA Video Connect uses encryption to ensure privacy in each session.

"The response from patients has been incredible," said Dr. Margaret Carrico, a VA primary care provider based at VAMC, Tampa.

"Overall, they are delighted. Because wherever they are, they don't have to come in here to see me. Their daughter doesn't have to get off work, or they don't have to drive in traffic."

Real-Time Clinic Based Video

VA is now recognized as an industry leader in the use of Clinical Video Telehealth, which uses telehealth technologies to make diagnoses, manage care, and perform check-ups.

These video technologies make it possible for patients to receive care at one of VA's 700 community-based outpatient clinics and connect to a specialist physician or other practitioner who may be in a medical center that may be several hundred miles away.

If Veteran's need medication prescriptions changed or if the Veteran needs to see the specialist in person, have special investigations or come into hospital then this can even be arranged through Clinical Video Telehealth.

To learn more about VA Video Connect, visit the VA App Store at mobile.va.gov/appstore.

Veterans "Connect the Docs" With VA, Private Providers

VA is working diligently to ensure that Veterans receive care as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Veteran's Health Information Exchange's "Connect the Docs" makes Veterans' health records available through a secure, electronic system to private health care providers ensuring up-to-date medical records for Veterans are available no matter where they are treated.

By sharing a Veteran's health information electronically, the VA and participating community care providers are better able to coordinate and improve the overall quality of care for our Veterans.

So how can you "Connect the Docs"? If you're a premium benefits account holder, you can sign up by clicking on the "Manage Health" tab and selecting "Share your VA Medical Records." After a simple authorization process, you're in! You can also apply in person at your local VA Healthcare System's Release of Information Office. Your information stays confidential with only the VA and your provider being able to access your records. Plus, you can stop the information exchange at any time.

For more visit https://www.va.gov/VLER/vler-health-exchange-registration-guide.asp.
DVAHCS Oncologists Reach Across Health Care Systems via Telehealth

Patients with cancer at the Veterans Healthcare System of the Ozarks (VHSO) in Fayetteville, Arkansas can now see a VA provider, thanks to an innovative system that allows providers based in other VA Healthcare centers to consult with patients remotely.

Recently, the VHSO lost its on staff Oncologist. Responsible for 23 counties in northwest Arkansas, southwest Missouri and eastern Oklahoma, the VHSO was faced with the hard decision. To push cancer-stricken Veterans to private Oncologists, which are under-represented in the area which the VHSO serves, or to find an acceptable stop-gap method until a suitable replacement can be found.

“The VHSO reached out to other VA facilities in hopes of finding Oncology expertise,” says Dr. Sandy Shah, Assistant Chief of Oncology at the DVAHCS. “We’ve been trying to expand our Oncology Telehealth services, and this seemed to be the perfect opportunity to do so. Plus, we get to help a fellow VA Healthcare System in need.”

Now, when a Veteran suffering from cancer comes to the VHSO seeking treatment or consultation services, they connect to a DVAHCS provider to discuss possible treatment options and perspectives, all on a secure link via Video. If the Veteran requires further care, Nurse Practitioners at the VHSO are there to assist, with follow-up and additional consultations through Video call if necessary. This helps with continuity of care, since many Veterans prefer to stay within the VA system for their healthcare needs.

“This really helps patients and providers in areas where there is a dearth in Oncology staff,” explains Dr. Shah. “Without Telehealth services, we would be forced to send Veterans outside the VA for Oncology care. It’s great opportunity for the VA to offer care in places that are otherwise underserved.”

FREE Parking & Shuttle Service Available!
Veterans may park at North Gate Mall and take FREE shuttles to and from the Durham VA Medical Center. The service runs Monday - Friday from 6 AM to 7 PM. The shuttles arrive and depart at 15 minute intervals at each location: Durham VA Medical Center - Main Entrance and North Gate Mall - in front of the Movie Theatre off the Gregson St./ I-85 Exit. GPS Address: 1058 W. Club Blvd, Durham, NC 27701.

Free Mental Health Smart Phone Apps For Veterans

The PTSD Coach App helps you learn about and cope with the symptoms related to Posttraumatic Stress that occur following trauma.

Tactical Breather App can be used to gain control over physiological and psychological responses to stress.

Breathe2Relax is a portable stress management tool. It is a hands-on diaphragmatic breathing exercise.

The Virtual Hope Box (VHB) contains simple tools to help patients with coping, relaxation, distraction, and positive thinking.

The T2 Mood Tracker App records a range of emotions from anxiety, depression, head injury, stress, posttraumatic stress and a user’s general well-being.