



Horizons

A NEWSLETTER OF WILKES-BARRE VA MEDICAL CENTER // DECEMBER 2019



Marcia Flugsrud-Breckenridge, MD, Ph.D., applies Battlefield Acupuncture needles to Veteran Richard Manta

MANAGING CHRONIC PAIN WITHOUT MEDICINE!

Veterans Receiving Effective Pain Relief from Centuries Old Practice!

While serving in the military many of our soldiers suffer injuries that often linger or resurface later in their civilian lives. Medications can often help manage their pain, many Veterans prefer alternative measures of pain management which may offer fewer side effects.

Veterans, at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, have been utilizing Battlefield Acupuncture as an alternative means of pain management with great success.

Battlefield Acupuncture is performed on the ears, with tiny semi-permanent needles inserted into each ear at very specific points. The needles work to suppress pain transmission to the spinal cord while producing endorphins that further reduce the feeling of pain. Our Veterans who have tried this method of pain suppression say, "it really works" and it reduces the need for pain medication.

Veteran Richard Manta, a Battlefield Acupuncture recipient with chronic back pain declares, "It's making a big difference in my life, I'm able to sleep better, I have developed better eating habits and my mobility has improved because I have less pain."

For many Veterans, Battlefield Acupuncture is a proven, safe and effective way to reduce pain without the prolonged use of anti-inflammatories and opioids.

The Interdisciplinary Pain Management Team at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center has a variety of non-pharmacological options available for the management and treatment of chronic and reoccurring pain. Talk to your Primary Care Provider about the options that may work best for you.

Battlefield Acupuncture works rapidly not only for reducing chronic pain but also helps relieve symptoms of depression and anxiety, alcohol dependence and migraine headaches. —MARCIA FLUGSRUD-BRECKENRIDGE, MD, PH.D., CHIEF OF PSYCHIATRY

A Message from the Director



Across our nation, we are grateful for the service of our Veterans. We graciously honor those who have served, in time of conflict and peace, as their collective dedication and sacrifice throughout the years has preserved our way of life for generations.

On the battlefield, Veterans were challenged to overcome many obstacles and adversities, not all of which were left behind following their service. For those Veterans and their families, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in Wilkes-Barre stands ready to serve.

It is true that not all Veterans are eligible for services through the VA, but utilization rates suggest that many eligible Veterans may be failing to take advantage of the services they so bravely earned.

A Veteran's eligibility for healthcare is based on a variety of criteria related to their service, but most Veterans who served on active duty, with an other than dishonorable discharge, are eligible to receive some level of care through their local VA.

Just as time passes and lives change, so may your eligibility and need for VA Healthcare or services. In the next few weeks, please take a moment to consider investigating your eligibility for VA services, and encourage your comrades, friends and family members to explore their options.

As a world class healthcare organization, we are here to serve our Veterans. Give us the opportunity to demonstrate our dedication to serve.

Sincerely,

Russell E Lloyd, Director



A few members of the Wellness Center Coffee Club – (L to R) Bob Dolan, Paul Stebbins, Bill Legg, Bob McMannes, Bruce Bredan and Leo Ellis

Wellness Gym... Healthier Lifestyles & Lifelong Friends

The science of Kinesiotherapy centers around the restoration of strength, endurance and mobility in individuals with functional limitations. At the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, Kinesiotherapy includes programs such as Cardio Rehabilitation, Pulmonary Rehabilitation, and the MOVE Program.

Therapy is considered completed when the individual accomplishes the restorative goals established between the therapist and the patient. Therapy is not intended as life long program, but a restorative process with specific goals.

Wilkes-Barre's Wellness Gym provides Veterans that have completed Cardio Rehabilitation, Pulmonary Rehabilitation, or MOVE Program the opportunity to continue their health improvement journey through independent exercise.

"We now have seven new pieces of equipment that most Veterans can use, especially those with mobility challenges. They can easily maneuver between the pieces of equipment, which are more efficient and ergonomic than the old machines. We're doing everything we can to decrease the physical limitations of the room, so that all our Veterans have access to the equipment."

—Gary Adams, Kinesiotherapist

Veterans choosing to continue with independent exercise in the Wellness Gym experience increased strength and mobility beyond the goals of therapy and long into the future.

Aside from the health benefits, many Veterans report the development of friendships through the Wellness Gym.

"Coming together like this is like having group therapy with a workout" —VETERAN BRUCE BRADEN

Jack Kozich works out three times a week at the Wellness Gym



Emily Richters offers healthy eating recipes to Veterans eight times a year

Veterans receive step by step instructions and are able to provide instant feedback



Healthy Eating for a Better Quality of Life

We can help you make healthy choices

In today's fast paced world, there's no doubt that sometimes eating on the fly is a fact of life. But with all the convenience of drive-thru meals and all you can eat buffets, eating healthy can be a daily challenge. Restaurants, diners, fast food, although convenient, often times do not support the healthiest of nutritional choices.

Nutrition and Food Service at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center understands the challenges of maintaining a healthy diet and are working to provide educational opportunities for our Veterans and their families to learn healthy eating.

Throughout the year, Nutrition and Food Service offers several Healthy Teaching Kitchen demonstrations aimed at improving nutritional health by teaching Veterans healthy cooking techniques and recipes which can help with weight management, diabetes, kidney disease, heart failure, and many other conditions.

Veterans attending the Healthy Teaching Kitchens do so for a variety of reasons, but they're all looking for an improved quality of life through healthier living. Research supports the benefits of nutritional health, as the weight loss associated with healthy eating has been shown to benefit the remission of Type 2 diabetes, improvement of cardiovascular health, relief of depression, reduction of obstructive sleep apnea, joint pain relief, improved fertility, and the alleviation of a variety of other medical conditions.

At our Healthy Teaching Kitchen events, not only do the Veterans themselves provide feedback on freshly prepared dishes, but they also bring us stories of similar dishes they create at home. These events encourage discussion of taste, flavor and tricks to simplify preparation of the recipes. Our Veterans don't leave class hungry, but they may leave a little healthier.

Offering Renewed Hope for Veterans with Vision Loss

Each year, hundreds of blind and visually impaired Veterans benefit from services and equipment provided through the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center's Visual Impairment Services (VIS) Program. The program goal is to restore independence and quality of life to Veterans experiencing vision loss.

Marine Leon Vieira, a 61 year old Vietnam Veteran, completely lost sight in one eye and became legally blind in the other due to glaucoma. Although painting had always been his passion, he feared his ability to paint would fade with his eyesight. He thought his painting days were over, but while being treated at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, Leon became aware of the vision enhancing technologies available through the VIS Program.

Through the VIS Program, each Veteran's visual impairment is assessed, an individual care plan is developed based on their visual needs and the activities they enjoy. In addition to providing rehabilitation therapies to teach the skills needed to perform daily living activities and safety in/around their homes and communities, the care plan also aims to incorporate adaptive equipment to allow Veterans, like Leon, to best utilize their remaining vision.

The loss of one's sight is a significant event which impacts so many daily life activities. Many Veterans don't know where to turn for help when they experience vision loss, but once they discover all that the VIS Program has to offer, they have a renewed hope that they can once again enjoy independent, productive and fulfilling lives.

"The Annual Vision Expo highlights the latest in vision enhancing technologies available to Veterans through the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center. By coupling rehabilitative training with the latest equipment and technology, we are able to assist our Veterans with continuing their passions despite their visual challenges."

—JENNIFER THROOP, VISUAL IMPAIRMENT SERVICES COORDINATOR, WILKES-BARRE VA MEDICAL CENTER



Vietnam Veteran Leon Vieira uses vision enhancing technology obtained through the VA to continue his passion for painting. *INSERT:* Vision enhancing device that can zoom up to 80 times the actual size



Veteran John Wrazin shows off his prize catch of the day: a 14 inch Perch



Veteran Willie Lee Lewis enjoys the day at the local bowling alley

Treating the Whole Resident

We often take the little things in life for granted, stopping by a friend's house on the way home from work, grabbing a movie on a Tuesday night for no real reason other than to get out of the house for a while, or a last-minute decision to get away for the weekend. Small occurrences really, yet activities we'd likely miss if they didn't occur.

For the Veterans residing within Wilkes-Barre's Community Living Center (CLC), the importance of these 'small occurrences' are more significant, anticipated, and more appreciated than with most.

All too often thoughts of healthcare center on exams and medications, without due consideration being given to the importance of smiles, laughter, and comradery. At Wilkes-Barre, we recognize that the provision of high-quality healthcare must include a variety of social engagement and activities.

A recent fishing trip to Lake Ladore had our Residents talking for weeks, both before and after the trip. Although Lake Ladore isn't a premier fishing destination, and it was only a day trip, it was an opportunity to take in some fresh air, boast about their fishing skills and reminisce of past catches with anyone who would stop long enough to listen.

There were no high-powered boats or expensive gear but sitting at the water's edge there also seemed to be no wheelchairs, no medications, and no limitations.

The fish that were caught weren't measured, but neither were the smiles, laughter or lies. To hear the tales of the trip, one might think they were catching marlin in the Florida Keys. Maybe the Residents have figured out, how to live in the moment and enjoy every one of those moments.

While I'm not going to suggest that you try to convince BlueCross/BlueShield to pay for your next fishing trip or vacation, I don't think anyone would argue the contribution of such activities to one's overall health. At Wilkes-Barre's CLC it's our goal to treat the entire Veteran.

"It's important that we offer a variety of activities to our Residents. The particular activity isn't really important, it's the anticipation and expectation of the event that gets our Residents excited. It's the activity that helps them forget their worries and allows their memories to take them to another place and time, even if it's just for a little while." — LINDA ZANESKI, ASSOCIATE CHIEF OF NURSING SERVICES- GERIATRICS & EXTENDED CARE

EIGHT CONVENIENT LOCATIONS TO SERVE YOU

Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center
1111 East End Blvd, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711
507-824-3521 / 877-928-2621

Allentown Community Based Outpatient Clinic
3110 Hamilton Blvd, Allentown, PA 18103
610-599-0127

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

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

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

Tobyhanna Community Based Outpatient Clinic
Tobyhanna Army Depot, Bldg. 220
Tobyhanna, PA 18466
570-615-8341

Wayne County Community Based Outpatient Clinic
600 Maple Avenue, Honesdale, PA 18431
570-251-6543

Williamsport Community Based Outpatient Clinic
1705 Warren Avenue, 3rd Fl, Ste. 304
Williamsport, PA 17701
570-322-4791



Call Center

1-877-928-2621

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WITH US



ONLINE

<http://www.wilkes-barre.va.gov>



FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/VAWilkesBarre>

Veterans Health Library Website Address Has Moved

For our Veterans who regularly check online for information about health conditions and treatment especially the Veterans Health Library, we want to inform you that the website address has moved to veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov. The library's clinically reviewed content will stay the same and you can continue to link through MyHealtheVet website or our stand-alone web site at veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov. With over 1 million page views yearly, clinicians and Veteran patients have come to find the Veterans Health Library as a reliable source for health information available to them. So, update your web browsers and bookmarks today!



Veterans Health Library
Your source for health information

