

ANNUAL REPORT

20
15

the Cutting Edge of Veteran Healthcare



Atlanta VA Medical Center



INTEGRITY

We act with high moral principle. We adhere to the highest professional standards, and we aim to maintain the trust and confidence of all with whom we engage.

COMMITMENT

We work diligently to serve Veterans and other beneficiaries. We are each driven by an earnest belief in VA's mission.

ADVOCACY

We are truly Veteran-centric by identifying, fully considering, and appropriately advancing the interests of Veterans and other beneficiaries.

RESPECT

We treat those we have the privilege to serve and with whom we work with dignity and respect. We show respect to earn it.

EXCELLENCE

We strive for the highest quality and continuous improvement. We are thoughtful and decisive in leadership, accountable for our actions, willing to admit mistakes, and rigorous in correcting them.

Much has been accomplished over the past year at the Atlanta VA Medical Center. Our highly-trained and professional staff of caregivers provided world-class care to more than 102,000 Veterans last year and continues to focus on enhancing and expanding access to care, improving customer service, maintaining quality, boosting efficiency, and promoting innovations in healthcare.

It's only been a few short months since I transitioned from my role as the director of the medical center, but now as the VA Southeast Network director, I'm confident that "Team Atlanta" employees will continue to focus on, and live by, our core values of integrity, commitment, advocacy, respect, and excellence. These are not just words, but the very foundation from which our service to Veterans and the ICare model is built.

I want to thank each member of "Team Atlanta" for their contributions to the community, Veteran Service Organizations, our volunteers, stakeholders, and of course, our Veterans.

"One team one fight" dedicated to improving the care and services for our Nations Heroes!



Leslie Wiggins
VISN7 Director

Almost fifty years ago, the Atlanta VA Medical Center (VAMC) first opened its doors to meet the needs of nearly 440,000 Veterans residing across north Georgia. Today the medical center, along with its 14 sites of care, supports one of the fastest growing Veteran population in the nation—one that has more than tripled over the past two decades alone.

To accommodate exponential growth, the Atlanta VAMC opened the Atlanta Clinic in July, 2015. The 83,000 square foot multi-specialty clinic was opened to improve access to care to nearly 36,000 Veterans annually and features services such as a primary care and mental health, full-service dental unit, dermatology unit, traumatic brain injury (TBI) unit, pain treatment unit, sleep medicine unit, Empower Veterans Program, Women's Wellness Clinic, Lab, X-ray and a Veterans Eligibility Center.

A combined 84,000 square feet of space has been approved for additional sites of care in neighboring Cobb, Pickens, and Newton counties to improve services and expand access to care for our Veteran patients.

Every single Atlanta VA employee, from the executive on down to the groundskeeper, is in the business of creating the best healthcare outcome for our Veterans. I could not be more proud of the care we provide, and this team will stay true to our principles and our promise to the Veterans we serve.



Dr. Robin E. Jackson
Atlanta VAMC Acting Director

Atlanta VAMC by the #Numbers

Medical Center Budget

Medical – **\$579,162,231**

Admin – **\$47,848,790**

Facilities – **\$70,910,746**

Total – **\$697,921,767**

Construction Projects – \$23,269,697

Pharmacy

Pharmacy expenditures (outpatient) - **\$86 Million**

Prescriptions filled – **2,414,757**

Filled locally – **465,084**

Mailed – **1,950,673**

Medical Service

Atlanta VAMC's Medical Specialty Service Line's more than **100** physicians provided more than **100,000** consults and **350,000** appointments for our Veterans last year

Atlanta VAMC's Medical Specialty Service Line's consists of more than **240** employees representing **15** Sections

Nutrition

The Atlanta VAMC served **366,345** meals to Veteran patients FY15

Logistics

Atlanta VAMC Logistics is responsible for supplying and re-supplying **21** sites spanning **360** miles

My HealthVet

The Atlanta VAMC saw more than a **31%** increase in Veterans enrolled in MyHealthVet

93% of our Veterans are using MyHealthVet's advanced features

79% more Atlanta VAMC Veterans are using secure messaging than last fiscal year

Education

Memoranda of affiliations currently exist with approximately **150** organizations which provide additional care delivery services and resources to this medical center.

The Atlanta VAMC manages **175** program-specific affiliations and coordinates numerous students these affiliated colleges/universities.

46 residency training programs are provided through **177** FTE and involve multiple clinicians in unique training environments.



Atlanta VAMC Receives Magnet® Redesignation

The Atlanta VAMC received Magnet® Re-designation Oct. 15, 2015 underscoring the excellence in nursing services by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). The Atlanta VAMC is one of only four VAMCs in the nation to currently hold this honor of nursing excellence and one of six medical centers in the state of Georgia. The Atlanta VAMC received Magnet® designation for the first time in 2009 and re-designation efforts began at that time.

The requirements for re-designation are far more extensive than when the recognition was originally received as the Magnet® reviewers are looking to see additional data, trends and improvements from the first application and the standards are more outcomes-focused. After months of hard work, the extensive required documentation was submitted in February 2014 and a site visit was conducted by several Magnet appraisers from Aug. 31 – Sept. 2, 2015.



Atlanta VA Medical Center (VAMC) nursing staff, senior leaders, representatives from throughout the medical center and JOESE (Journey of Excellence, Soaring to Excellence), the Atlanta VAMC Magnet Mascot, gathered on the morning of October 15, 2015 to hear the news about Magnet® Recognition Program re-designation.

OVERVIEW & SITES OF CARE

ATLANTA VA MEDICAL CENTER • ATLANTA CLINIC • AUSTELL • BLAIRSVILLE • EASTPOINT • FORT MCPHERSON • FULTON COUNTY CLINIC •



Atlanta VA Medical Center (VAMC), a Joint Commission and Magnet® designated medical facility sits on 26 acres in Decatur, Georgia—just minutes from downtown Atlanta. The main medical center is a level 1A tertiary care facility providing patient-centered healthcare via an array of comprehensive medical, surgical, geriatric specialty services, as well as state-of-the-art diagnostic testing throughout 14 sites of care. With 445 operating beds, including a 120-bed Community Living Center, a 40-bed domiciliary, and a 12-bed Residential Treatment Program, the Atlanta VAMC is uniquely positioned to serve the healthcare needs of more than 130,000 enrolled Veterans living in 50 counties across northeast Georgia.



Home for Our Heroes

The Eagles' Nest Community Living Center (CLC) leads the Atlanta VAMC in a "Cultural Transformation" by designing units that are more holistic healing and homelike environment. Today's remodeled units include, but are not limited to, removing the nurses stations, changing bathing areas to a more spa-like environment, and creating day rooms with multiple computers for patient use. Additionally, the medical center has submitted a capital project to build a new 4th floor to the CLC to extend home design features into resident's quarters with improved views of the cityscape.

The main facility encompasses 10 beds for complex care and post-acute care and 40 beds for respite care and long-stays. The CLC is now serving made-to-order breakfast in the Eagle's Express dining room.

Additionally, the Trinka Davis Veterans Village CLC can house up to 42 residents. That site, in the rural community of Carrollton, Ga. features a family-centered approach to treatment, which includes general long term care.





Trinka Davis Veterans Village

Life is
Beautiful



Thom Porter, CLC Recreational Therapist, helps Veterans build stronger cognitive & motor skills

Audiology and Speech Pathology

Audiology and Speech Pathology at the Atlanta VAMC proudly served over 13,000 Veterans with 27,000 encounters in 2015. The Audiology Clinic provides comprehensive hearing and balance services including diagnostic hearing exams, the dispensing of state-of-the-art hearing aids and assistive listening devices, tinnitus assessment and management, cochlear implant programming, auditory processing disorder evaluations, compensation and pension exams, and balance testing and treatment. Hearing loss and tinnitus represent two of the most common service connected disabilities.

The Speech Pathology team provides inpatient and outpatient evaluation, diagnostics, treatment, counseling, and education to Veterans with speech, voice, swallowing, and cognitive-linguistic disorders resulting from a wide variety of impairments including, but not limited to stroke, head and neck cancer, neurological conditions, traumatic brain injury, deconditioning, and tracheostomy. Both Audiology and Speech Pathology use advanced equipment including the use of telehealth to meet the unique needs of these patient populations.



New Nursing Education Programs Approved for 2015-2016

The Veterans Affairs Nursing Academic Partnership in Graduate Education (VANAP-GE) and the Nurse Practitioner Residency program, a joint effort between the Emory Nell Hodgson School of Nursing and the Atlanta VAMC, offers geriatric nurse practitioner residents focused didactic and clinical experience in the geriatric care of Veterans. The VANAP-GE program is funded by the Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) through a five year grant. The geriatric nurse practitioner residents will have the opportunity to experience Veteran-centric geriatric health care at the Atlanta VAMC, working in close collaboration with their preceptors who are experienced nurse practitioners or physicians. In addition, they become part of the interdisciplinary team of nurse practitioners, physicians, social workers, pharmacists, psychologists, and support staff in developing care for Veterans.



Path to Success!

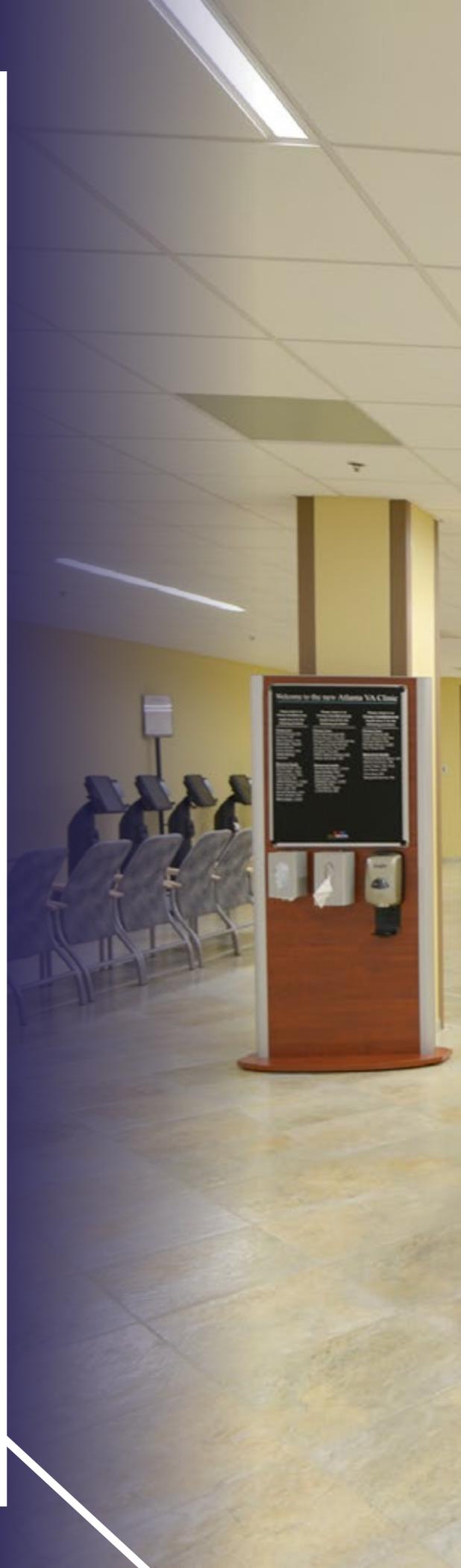
Improving customer service has remained a top priority of the Atlanta VA Medical Center Leadership Team.

The Client Advisory Council worked extensively on the Ambassador Program, which has since been recognized nationally as an exceptional standard of care for providing a pathway for Veterans in the Comprehensive Work Therapy (CWT) and has led to more than a dozen Veterans transition to full-time employment with the VA.

“*Knowing that every time I assist a Veteran, I’m making someone’s experience at the Atlanta VA more enjoyable and more efficient! This is the best part for me in being an Ambassador!*”

- Ambassador Terrance F.

The Ambassador Program provides assistance to Veterans and visitors as they navigate the medical center. Ambassadors are identified by their maroon blazers, white shirt, black tie and black pants, and are located at information desks throughout the main campus and many of our other sites of care.

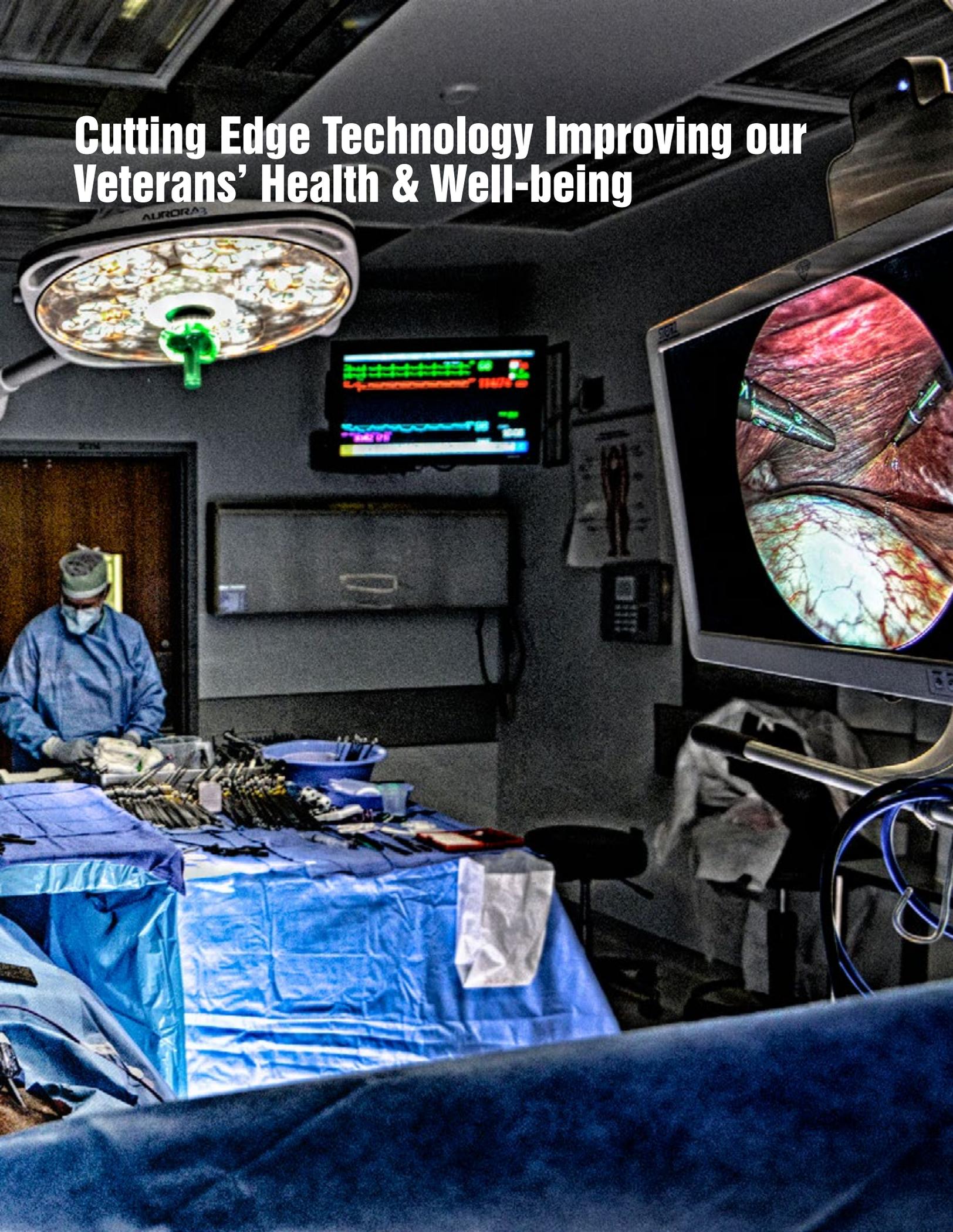


Information





Cutting Edge Technology Improving our Veterans' Health & Well-being



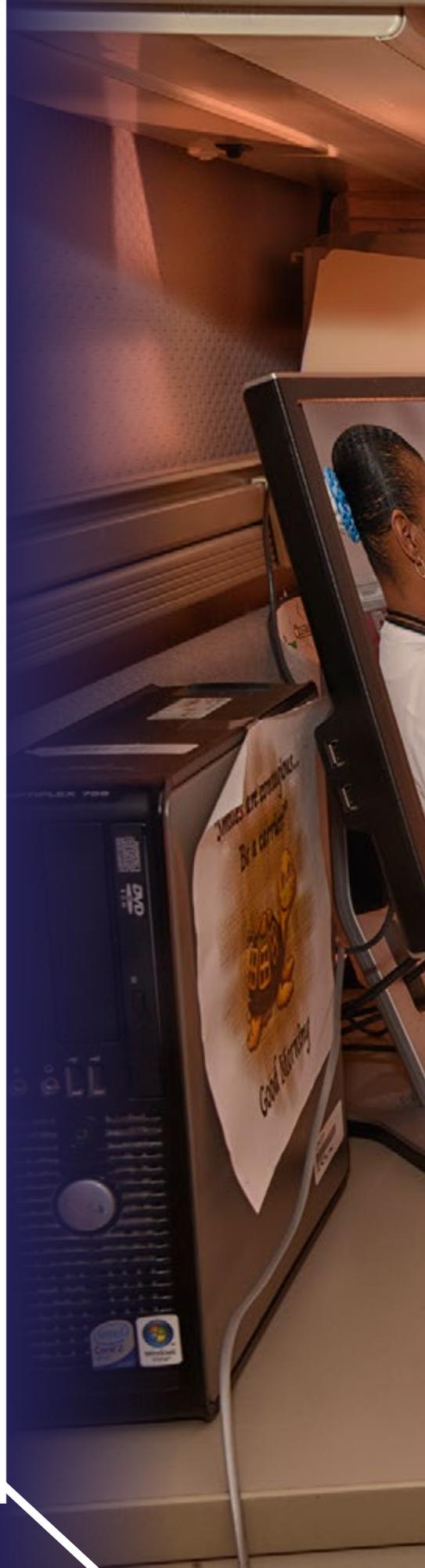
Atlanta VAMC Telehealth Mission

The Atlanta VA Medical Center is at the forefront of technologies that help improve health care services to our Veterans. Telehealth strives to meet our Veterans' healthcare needs through the use of technology that aims to make the home into the preferred place of care, whenever possible.

“ *20% more Veterans utilize some mode of Virtual Care in FY15 than FY14* ”

In FY15, the Atlanta VAMC activated new telehealth specialties in support of compensation and pension mental health evaluations and intensive community mental health recovery services. Additional telehealth initiatives brought telehealth into the home for Veterans in need of tele-mental health care and tele-speech care. The facility expanded other areas of telehealth such as general mental health, spinal cord injury consultations, tele-post operational surgery (for vascular procedures), tele-pulmonary follow up care, tele-geropsychiatry, and tele-traumatic brain injury.

Not only will we continue to provide great services in our community, but Atlanta is also reaching out to some of the Veteran Integrated Service Network 7's smaller more rural VAMCs to provide specialty services to Veterans that would otherwise have to drive hours just for a specialty procedure consult.





The Atlanta VAMC surpassed VA's National Goal by

27% in Veterans utilizing some mode of Virtual Care

Mental Health Services

The Atlanta VAMC's Mental Health Service has grown significantly in fiscal year 2015, bringing on board new psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, nurses and peer specialists. These new clinical providers are located not only in the main medical center, but also at many of our sites of care allowing us to provide mental health services in communities closer to Veterans' homes.



The Atlanta VAMC Mental Health Service features 27 Peer Specialists who complement our clinical teams in inpatient, residential and outpatient programs, and ranks as one of the top five VA facilities nationwide providing peer-led services.



The 2015 Clothesline Project for Veterans who Survived Military Sexual Trauma. The Clothesline Project is a artistic/visual display that raises awareness and offers support to those who have experienced sexual assault and/or sexual harassment, and their supporters, during military service.

Caring for Women Veterans



The Atlanta VAMC Women's Wellness Clinic moved to the Atlanta Clinic, a state-of-the-art facility, which is environmentally green and designed specifically to accommodate our female Veterans. The Women's Wellness Clinic routinely holds monthly Saturday pap clinics to ensure patient access to this important preventative care service. Saturday clinics are also available for intake appointments. In FY16, we plan to open a Pelvic Pain Clinic that will be staffed by a national pelvic pain expert.

In recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness month, the AVAMC holds a Pink Out each October, where everyone is encouraged to wear pink. The event, hosted by Atlanta VAMC's Women Veterans Health Committee and in collaboration with Emory St. Joseph's hospital, helps to educate staff and patients about breast cancer.



Women Veterans Enrolled

16,277

Women Veteran Patients Treated

11,654

\$25 million: Total research budget exceeding

\$15.4 million funded by the VA and the remainder funded by the National Institutes of Health, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and other sources.

In FY15, the Atlanta VA research program had **477** active projects conducted by **143** principal investigators





Excellence in Research

The Atlanta VAMC has a highly active research program which is near the top ten in the nation and is largely conducted by VA physician-scientists who are also faculty members at Emory University or Morehouse Schools of Medicine.

The program's main focus is to support the clinical mission by providing novel, innovative and state of the art treatment and technologies to Veterans. The program includes one of the national VA Rehabilitation Research Centers, the Center for Visual and Neurocognitive Rehabilitation, which focuses on enhancing Veterans' health by conducting research on the rehabilitation of visual and related neurological impairments.

These research projects are able to cover a broad range of important medical topics, including bacterial infection, diabetes, development of new anti-viral medications, low vision and disequilibrium in the elderly, unique treatments for elderly patients with Parkinson's Disease, and many other life-altering conditions.

#AVAMCInnovation

The Atlanta VA Medical Center, alongside Forge and the VA Center for Innovation, hosted the 2015 Health Innovation Challenge in April to develop solutions to real problems facing healthcare.

The 36-hour innovation sprint challenged participants to leverage technology while creating a better healthcare experience for our nation's Veterans. VA's Interim Under Secretary for Health Dr. Carolyn Clancy delivered the keynote address.



Innovation helps solve the most challenging problems in healthcare by connecting founders, clinicians, investors and mentors.

photos courtesy of FORGE Health







ATLANTA VA MEDICAL CENTER

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