McGuire VA Medical Center enjoyed a year of clinical excellence, along with growth and change. So many events encompassed 2013; we wanted to share a few of them with you.

The medical center’s year began with research innovations. A multicenter large scale study focusing on the “Effect of Daily Chlorhexidine Bathing on Hospital Acquired Infection” appeared in the New England Journal of Medicine. The focus of the study demonstrated a significant decrease (23%) in the spread of hospital acquired multidrug resistant organisms and subsequent prevalence. Also, the study focused on a significant decrease (28%) in the rate of hospitalized acquired blood infections by utilizing daily chlorhexidine bathing. This is a simple technique that will affect practice and cost. Richmond VAMC physicians, Drs. Michael Climo and Ed Wong, both experts in the field of infection control served as authors of the study.

Drs. Climo and Wong

The medical center’s participation in the Million Veteran Program (MVP), a VA wide study with expected enrollment of one million Veterans over the next five to seven years. In order to accomplish this, MVP will establish one of the largest databases of genetic, military exposure, lifestyle, and health information. The goal of MVP is to better understand how genes affect health and illness in order to improve health care for Veterans.

Guests from the community, the state and around the globe visited the Richmond VA Medical Center during the year to visit hospitalized.

Cardiac Transplant Team: Serving Our Nation’s Heroes for Over Three Decades

In January 2014, McGuire VA Medical Center will recognize over three decades of cardiac transplant care for Veterans and also celebrate a thirty year cardiac transplant patient. The McGuire VA Medical Center Heart Transplant Program continues a long history of providing heart transplant services to our patients with advanced heart failure. The first VA heart transplant program in the nation was started at McGuire VA Medical Center in November 1980 with the leadership of Dr. Szabolcs Szentpetery. The program has continued over the past 33 years, today with the leadership of Dr. Gundars Katlaps, Surgical Director and Dr. Neil Lewis, Medical Director. We are very proud that Dr. Szentpetery remains active and on staff at McGuire continuing to serve our Nation’s Veterans.
A Year in Review, continued

active duty service members and learn more about the medical center programs and even how to implement a rehabilitation program in another country.

In May, Richmond VA Medical Center was proud to welcome John A. Brandecker as the Medical Center Director. Prior to this appointment Mr. Brandecker had spent 25+ years as a senior leader at several first rate academic health systems in New York, Illinois, Florida, Iowa and Texas. Most recently at University of Texas Southwestern in Dallas, Mr. Brandecker served as the Associate Vice President and Chief Operations Officer of their University Hospitals and oversaw all hospital operations and services, as well as facility-based clinical service lines.

During the summer, the Richmond VA Medical Center also opened a new 10,000 square foot Polytrauma expansion. The new space was a first step into an overall renovation project to provide a comprehensive, state-of-the art, inpatient Center of Excellence for Polytrauma Rehabilitation. The new and renovated spaces include a therapeutic clinical environment with 20 inpatient beds and two 1000+sq ft therapy gyms. The area will also include education kiosks, relaxation rooms, patient-family space, an outdoor patio, an interactive educational and training center and research laboratory space.

In the fall, McGuire VA Medical Center held a Ground Breaking for a new 19,000 square foot addition for the expansion of Mental Health Services. The crisp blue sky morning was perfect for the event as over one hundred Veterans, staff members and area media stood outside the emergency room at the very site where the new entrance for the center will be located. The new 8.2 million dollar addition will offer a spectrum of recovery oriented, patient centered, mental health services for Veterans and their families. The expansion will include expanded exam and group rooms and assessment and therapy space.

Richmond VA Medical Center also hosted the annual Stand Down for Homeless Veterans on the medical center’s campus. The event offered a variety of services specifically targeted at meeting the needs of homeless Veterans in one central convenient location. There was food, shelter referrals, clothing, health screenings, VA benefits and more. The target population that attended the event included hundreds of homeless Veterans, needing care and services in order to further the VA goal of ending homelessness by 2015.

Reaching and caring for America’s Veterans in rural communities was a major initiative for the Richmond VA Medical Center in 2013. The Telehealth service program at the medical center offers a virtual bridge between geographically remote patients and the health care services they may need. Continued next page...
With the beginning of 2014, innovation and growth are a theme that continues within the campus and the community based outpatient clinics for the Richmond VA Medical Center. The McGuire team proudly looks forward to the New Year, continuing to serve our Nation’s Heroes.

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With several community based outpatient clinics and specialized services, the ability to reach and treat Veterans in locations other than the medical center continues to grow. According to Dr. Phillip Tarkington, chief of Health Informatics and Telehealth Services, “the VA is on the cutting edge of telehealth technology.”

Implantation of Stem Cells to Repair Articular Cartilage

Dr. Jonathan Brantley, Chief of Podiatry Service, currently performs stem cell implantation to repair articular cartilage damage in a patient’s damaged ankle joint. The procedure results in the differentiation of cartilage cells into hyaline cartilage. This is the optimal type of cartilage; as opposed to fibrocartilage which grows after an injury but is not ideal. Fibrocartilage acts as scar tissue—while it is still protective, the joint will not glide and move freely as with hyaline cartilage. Joints that have healed with fibrocartilage can also still be painful. The type of material used in this procedure is stem cells from human amniotic membrane obtained after delivery.

Above, Dr. Brantley prepares the implant in the OR. The location of the implant is illustrated at right.

Richmond VAMC Providing a Bridge to Cardiac Transplants

The Heart Transplant program continues to be on the cutting edge in the treatment of advanced and end-stage heart failure. McGuire remains the only in-house VA Heart Transplant program in the nation. McGuire is also the only VAMC in the nation to offer Left Ventricle Assist Device (LVAD) as a bridge to transplant and as destination (permanent) treatment. The McGuire LVAD program started with the first implant nearly 20 years ago in 1995. Following the 2008 FDA approval of the new generation of continuous flow LVADs, the McGuire program has increased its LVAD activity in view of the burgeoning epidemic of heart failure and the greatly improved outcomes after LVAD surgery. This has allowed our team to provide the sickest patients the opportunity to dramatically improve their state of health, and it has increased the opportunity for a successful outcome following transplantation.
December Leadership Forum

Service Awards, Years of Service:
Cecile B. Rock, 30 years – Geriatrics & Extended Care
Sonia R. Coe, 30 years – Materiel Management
Donna B. Bonner, 30 years – Radiation/Oncology
Pamela A. Buyalos, 30 years – Radiology
Frank W. Novitzki, 35 years – Engineering
Evelyn C. Randolph, 35 years – Radiology

Please share your events with us for inclusion in upcoming newsletters. Send an email to: Darlene.Edwards@va.gov