



National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission

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VA Expands Women's Health Practitioner Trainings

Nearly 1500 Providers Trained through National Mini-Residency Program

The Department of Veterans Affairs has trained nearly 1,500 providers through its flagship National Women's Health Mini-Residency Program, one of many training opportunities for VA clinicians to sharpen their women's health skills.

"We have collaborated throughout VA to develop training that keeps VA providers and staff at the forefront on women's health issues," said VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki. "This training will help VA prepare for the continuing increase in women Veterans and the accompanying complexity of their health care needs."

VA is offering an unprecedented number of creative education opportunities to its health care providers interested in women's health care. The training ranges from traditional lectures with direct instruction to online and audio courses. Several courses target physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners; other courses have sections geared toward wider audiences, including nurses, pharmacists, social workers, and psychologists. VA's Employee Education System and VHA's Simulation Learning Education and Research Network partnered closely with Women's Health Education to develop the courses.

"Health care providers throughout VA must understand that women have unique health care needs and that different approaches might be necessary to provide the highest quality care to them," said VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Robert Petzel.

Training programs include:


- The flagship *Mini-Residency Program on Primary Health Care for Women Veterans*, which has educated nearly 1,500 VA primary care providers using techniques like first-hand practice, lectures, and case discussions. This year, an online e-learning version of the mini-residency has been released as well as a mini-residency program for nurses.
- *Monthly Women's Health Provider Audio-conferences*, which are designed to complement the mini-residency program by supplying providers with up-to-date information about important women's health topics. A new *Monthly Women's Health Nursing Audio-conference Series* launched in May 2012.
- *Women's Health Emergency Medicine Course*, a series of 10 online modules that use virtual patient scenarios, interactive content delivery, and videos to educate emergency care providers about common women's health issues in emergency rooms. The first module was released this year and an additional three are slated for release this summer.
- *Women's Health Simulation Equipment and Videos* enable health care providers at VA facilities nationwide to get hands-on training in breast and gynecologic examinations. One such system is MAMMACARE, involving computerized simulation equipment that gives the provider the opportunity to hone hand-eye coordination when assessing lumps.

To reach VA's more remote locations, Women's Health Services recently partnered with VA's Office of Rural Health to sponsor 15 Women's Health Education Innovation Grants. These grants are providing resources to produce creative ideas for women's health education training at 15 VA locations nationwide. Lessons learned from this grant program will be used to shape future national training initiatives.

Additionally, the VA Women's Health Advanced Fellowship Program, which provides stipends to trainees in health care professions, has been expanded from seven to eight sites. Previously available only to physician trainees, the program has begun an inter-professional approach that incorporates training of associated health and nursing professionals. The Women's Health Advanced Fellowship Program is sponsored by VA's Office of Academic Affiliations.

Women Veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the Veteran population. By 2020, VA estimates women Veterans will constitute 10 percent of the Veteran population and 8 percent of VA patients.

For more information about VA programs and services for women Veterans, please visit: www.va.gov/womenvet and www.womenshealth.va.gov.


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