



bulletin

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission

1608 K Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20006

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31-12

August 31, 2012

VA Continues to Reduce Gender Disparities in Health Care *Report Shows National Initiative to Eliminate the Gap Is Working*

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has released a report that shows improvement in gender disparities in 12 out of 14 Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) measures in VA since 2008.

HEDIS measures are used by 90 percent of America's health plans to measure performance on important dimensions of care and service, such as screening, prevention and chronic disease management. VA consistently scores higher than private sector health care on both gender-specific and gender-neutral HEDIS measures.

“We have a solemn obligation to provide high-quality health care to all Veterans, regardless of gender. Although we are encouraged by the progress we have achieved, we are not going to stop working until all gaps are eliminated,” said Secretary Eric K. Shinseki.

VA began a national initiative to eliminate gender gaps in preventive care in 2008. In 2011, VA asked each health care region across the country to review gender disparity data and create and implement an improvement plan. The

Comparing the Care of Men and Women Veterans in the Department of Veterans Affairs report released by VA's Office of Informatics and Analytics (OIA)

indicates progress. The report shows that VA improved gender disparities in six performance measures specific to VA, including the screening rate for persistence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms.

Other findings from the report include:

- VA has improved rates of screening women Veterans for depression, PTSD and colorectal cancer.
- VA has improved disease prevention for women Veterans through increased vaccination rates.
- VA has improved chronic disease management for women Veterans in hypertension, diabetes and hyperlipidemia, all significant risk factors for cardiac disease.
- Although the gender gaps have narrowed, care remains better for men than women in cholesterol control, diabetes management and flu vaccination.

The OIA report includes results of Veterans' inpatient and outpatient satisfaction surveys, which show that men and women Veterans reported similar satisfaction except in the Getting Care Quickly and Getting Needed Care outpatient sections.


VA has implemented a national initiative to improve care for women Veterans. Some of the components include training VA providers in basic and advanced women's health care, implementation of women's health primary care teams at VA facilities nationwide and ramped-up communications efforts. The Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group, which leads the initiative, also issued a report looking at gender disparities. That report, *Gender Differences in Performance*

Measures, VHA 2008-2011, identifies best practices for eliminating gender gaps based on success in VA networks.

“We’re looking at what works and trying to replicate it throughout VA’s system,” said Patricia Hayes, chief consultant for the Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group. “We want to sustain this trend toward shrinking gender disparities and become a model for all other health care systems on how to eliminate gender disparities. Most importantly, we want to give every Veteran the best health care.”

Both reports can be downloaded via www.womenshealth.va.gov.

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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