

Retiree Bi-Weekly Update 28 January 2014

**Remember, all past updates and quarterly newsletters can be found at
BaseNolaRetiree.org**

For some veterans, managing the symptoms of **posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)** may seem like an overwhelming task. To assist in this process, the VA's National Center for PTSD is offering online tools that help Veterans manage symptoms anywhere, anytime.

According to Rebecca Jackson Stoeckle of the Massachusetts-based Education Development Center (EDC), online tools are playing an increasingly important role in delivering mental health services to Veterans in need. And when these tools are research-based, they can be critical supplements to ongoing clinical care.

EDC has already built and released one tool, called [PTSD Coach Online](#). This web-based platform grew out of the popular PTSD Coach smartphone app, which was developed by the Center and offers 17 different evidence-informed tools to help those suffering from PTSD cope with its symptoms. The tools range from instructions for how to use deep breathing exercises to relieve stress to short interactive tutorials that help users develop healthy habits, such as better sleep patterns.

Tricare sends out a lot of information, only a portion of which I put in the updates. You can get connected to webinars and emails from them.

Visit the TRICARE Media Center at www.tricare.mil/podcasts.

Sign up for TRICARE e-mail updates at www.tricare.mil/subscriptions.

New Year's resolutions are easy to make, but hard to keep. According to a recent [statistic](#), the **number one resolution is to "lose weight"** and coming in at number five is to "eat healthier." It's clear that eating healthy, staying fit and losing weight are often at the top of our lists when we start a new year. But maintaining a healthy weight can be a lifelong battle, especially for individuals with disabilities. Tricare and the VA have programs that can help you reach these goals.

VA asked hundreds of Veterans to tell us what they liked and didn't like about the labels on their prescriptions. The results led to this **new patient-centric prescription label**. They have cleaned up the look and made the following changes: Your name has been moved to the top of the label. Directions on how to take your medication are now larger and bolded. The date the prescription can no longer be refilled is clearly stated. The new design makes it easier to identify important drug and safety information. - See more at:

<http://www.va.gov/HEALTH/NewsFeatures/2015/January/A-New-and-Improved-VA-Prescription-Label.asp#sthash.n3OFJmJw.dpuf>

Check into the National Preparedness Community, an online community where more than 48,000 people connect and collaborate on emergency preparedness awareness and activities. Use it to empower yourself to prepare and to coordinate preparedness activities with your family, neighbors, co-workers, and those with whom you may study or worship.

Veterans who have **appealed their disability claims wait an average of 1,937 days** for final decisions, according to numbers listed in VA's Monday Morning Workload Report of Jan. 5. That time span is about 500 days longer than a standard four-year enlistment in the military. Hearn told the committee that nearly 75 percent of claims presented at Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) have either been improperly denied at a VA regional office, or inadequately developed and denied prematurely. Many claims were also appealed because their claims adjudicators failed to follow their legally mandated duties to assist veterans. - See more at: <http://www.legion.org/legislative/225794/legion-va-claims-appeals-can-be-%E2%80%98adjudication-purgatory%E2%80%99#sthash.gQm9Acyu.dpuf>

Social Security announces as a result of Congress' approval of the fiscal year 2015 budget, the agency will **expand its hours** nationwide and offices will be open to the public for an additional hour on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, effective March 16, 2015. A field office that is usually open from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. will remain open until 4:00 p.m. Offices will continue to close to the public at noon every Wednesday so employees have time to complete current work and reduce backlogs.

With the implementation of the **Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA)** in 2010, TRICARE beneficiaries may have questions about how it would affect them. The ACA and TRICARE are very different, governed by two different pieces of legislation so changes in one have no effect on the other.

The intent of the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, was to provide affordable health insurance options to everyone. This is the first major difference between TRICARE and the ACA. TRICARE is not health insurance; it is a federal health care entitlement program only for eligible uniformed service members, retirees and their families.

The ACA required a set of minimum essential benefits for commercial health insurance. Before the passage of the ACA, TRICARE had already provided most of these benefits such as cost-free screenings, vaccinations and counseling. One ACA provision not previously addressed by TRICARE was to allow children to remain on their parent's health insurance up to age 26. The 2011 National Defense Authorization Act created the authority to implement the TRICARE Young Adult (TYA) program. TYA is a premium based program that restores TRICARE coverage to adult children up to the age of 26 after they lose their TRICARE coverage due to age.

TRICARE is a benefit established under law as the health care program for the uniformed services, retirees and their families. The ACA did affect change in health care coverage for many Americans, but the **legislation did not apply directly to TRICARE**. For more information, visit the [TRICARE](#) website.

Every other week, I glean through around 100 of emails from the subscriptions I have to get information. One such subscription is shown below. From that, you only see a couple of pages of highlights that most apply to a retired Coastie. That said, you should be thankful indeed that you joined the Coast Guard. So much of what I see is related to PTSD, severe injury programs, homelessness and people with horrific issues. The very nature of our service did not put you in harm's way to the extent the other services do. Our service taught you job skills that translated easily to civilian occupations. We had our trials and tribulations, but I've never had anyone shoot

at me. We are a positive law enforcement agency that benefits our economy and health of our people. If you have the opportunity, you should be proud to give back some time or money to those who were asked to give much more. Your local AmVet, DAV or American Legion Post is a good way to start.

One subscription:

You have made the following changes to your Veterans Health Administration subscriptions:

You subscribed to topics:

- Spinal Cord Injury
- Transplant Program
- War-Related Illness and Injury (WRIISC)
- CHAMPVA
- Blind Rehabilitation
- Center for Women Veterans
- Chaplain Services
- Dental Care Benefits
- Disease Prevention
- Fisher House
- Geriatrics & Extended Care
- HealthierUS Veterans
- Job Rehabilitation & Employment
- Mental Health
- Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Centers
- MOVE!
- National Center for Patient Safety
- Nursing
- Pharmacy Benefits
- Prescriptions
- Prosthetics and Sensory Aids
- Readjustment Counseling
- Caregiver Support
- Smoking Cessation
- Social Work
- Substance Abuse Programs
- National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic
- National Veterans Golden Age Games
- National Veterans Wheelchair Games
- National Veterans TEE Tournament
- National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic
- National Veterans Creative Arts Festival
- Suicide Prevention
- Public Health Announcements
- Military Exposures

- Radiation Exposure
- Telehealth
- Weight Management
- Women Veterans Health Care
- Women Veterans (OEF/OIF)
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Compensated Work Therapy (CWT)
- Vet Centers
- VA News Releases
- Inside Veterans Health
- Hepatitis C
- VHA Human Factors Office Quarterly Newsletter
- Agent Orange
- Clinician's Trauma Update - Online (6 issues/yr)
- PTSD Research Quarterly (4 issues/yr)
- VA Staff PTSD Updates
- Quality of Care
- PTSD Monthly Update (Professionals)
- PTSD Weekly Update
- Coaching Into Care
- Problem Solving Training
- Gulf War Veterans
- Camp Lejeune Water Supplies
- Flu
- Rural Health
- National Center for Ethics in Health Care
- Health Equity Research
- Homelessness
- VA Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation
- Incarcerated Vets Re-Entry Services and Resources
- VA Mobile Apps Quarterly Newsletter
- VA Careers Announcements
- HIV/AIDS Program
- My HealthVet
- Federal Benefits for Veterans
- Patient Rights & Responsibilities
- VHA Publications - Brochures
- Volunteer Opportunities
- R&D - Features / Research Currents
- Covered Drugs (Formulary)
- VA Privacy Practices
- VHA Facebook
- VHA YouTube
- Polytrauma
- VHA Twitter
- VHA Publications - Directives

- VHA Publications - Handbooks
- VHA Publications - Information Letters
- VHA Publications - Notices
- PTSD Monthly Update
- Medication Safety Alerts
- Medical Professional Training
- Vantage Point Blog
- Returning Service Members - Helping Our Heroes
- VA Health Care Eligibility & Enrollment
- Prostate Cancer

You subscribed to categories:

- Clinicians / Providers
- Diseases & Conditions
- Ethics in Healthcare
- Health & Wellness
- Mental Health
- News and Information
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- PTSD for Providers and Researchers (includes PTSD Monthly Update)
- Public Health Issues
- Research & Development
- Special Events
- VA Careers
- Volunteer Opportunities

You will receive an email update when new information becomes available.

Seeing what other military members have to deal with, send a thank you card to your Coast Guard recruiter.