



# NWVI Messenger

For the week of June 21, 2010

## Casual Wear

The VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (VA NWIHCS) dress code policy applies to all employees, work-study, residents, students, contract personnel, and volunteers while on official duty in the health care system. As summer begins, it's a good time to remember what you choose to wear affects how you are perceived by patients, fellow employees, and the public.

Proper attire demonstrates competence and respect for others. Shorts, flip flops and spaghetti strap

tops are among the items not considered appropriate dress while on duty. If in doubt, refer to Health Systems Policy, DIR-012 Dress Code, dated July 25, 2008. The policy is available at <http://vaww.nebraska.va.gov/>. From the left menu, click on "policies," and then search on the words "dress code."

Employees with questions about whether a particular item of attire is appropriate should discuss it with their supervisor and/or union representative.

## Medication Co-Payment Changes

Effective July 1, Veterans with higher incomes and no service-connected disabilities enrolled in Priority Groups 7 and 8 will pay an additional \$1 for each 30-day supply of outpatient medications. The increase from \$8 to \$9 is the first change in VA's medication co-pay since 2006.

This change does not impact Veterans in Priority Groups 2 through 6 who will continue to pay \$8 for each 30-day supply of medications for their non-service connected conditions unless otherwise exempted. Veterans in Priority Group 2 through 6 will also continue to have their

out-of-pocket expenses for VA outpatient medications capped at \$960 per calendar year. Veterans who have an injury or illness connected with their military service resulting in a disability rated 50 percent or greater—enrolled in Priority Group 1—are exempt from this co-pay.

Veterans who have difficulty paying co-payments for outpatient medications should discuss the matter with their local VA enrollment coordinator. Veterans may also contact VA at (877) 222-VETS (8387) or visit VA's health eligibility Web site at [www.va.gov/healtheligibility](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility).

## Omaha Patient Forum

Veterans are invited to attend a Patient Forum June 30 at VA NWIHCS, Omaha from 5 to 6 p.m. in the Education Conference Room (first floor).

Veterans can offer feedback about their experiences receiving health care at VA NWIHCS. They will also receive an update about VA NWIHCS services and activities.

Representatives from VA NWIHCS leadership, patient advocate, public affairs and others will be available to answer questions.

In addition, **Mary McElmeel**, Patient Education Coordinator, will present information about My HealthVet, VA's award-winning e-health Web site,

*-Continued on page 2*

## CALENDAR

### June

*Fireworks Safety Month*

*National Safety Month*

21 Summer Begins

### July

*Ultraviolet (UV) Safety Month*

*Fireworks Safety Month*

4 Independence Day

4-9 National Veterans Wheelchair Games

6-12 Alzheimer's Awareness Week

21 VA Created (1930)

### August

*Cataract Awareness Month*

*National Immunization Awareness Month*

4 Coast Guard Day

26 Womens Equality Day

### September

*National Preparedness Month*

*Alcohol and Drug Addicton Recovery Month*

*Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month*

*Cholesterol Education Month*

*Prostate Health Month*

6 Labor Day

5-11 Suicide Prevention Week

11 Patriot Day

17 POW/MIA Recognition Day

19-24 National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic

19-25 National Surgical Technologist Week

-Forum continued from page 1

which offers Veterans, active duty service members, their dependents and caregivers anywhere, anytime Internet access to VA health care information and services

This program is part of VA's goal to be better engaged with Veterans and stakeholders, to listen to their opinions about their health care experiences, and to continue down the path of continuous improvement of VA's health care system.

For more information, contact Maggie Oldham at (402) 995-5547.

## **More Parking Available for Veterans**

VA NWIHCS has conducted an analysis of the current parking spaces at VA NWIHCS, Omaha to provide better access to health care and increase parking opportunities close to the main facility.

Parking lot 1, which is the lot closest to the medical center with a large number of handicapped parking spaces, has been reserved for patients and guests Mondays through Fridays between 7 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. (excluding federal holidays).

This increased the number of reserved spaces available for Veterans. There are still two shuttles operating that provide transportation to and from the main parking lot and the Center Mall. Each driver carries a cell phone that can be called to facilitate being picked up. The numbers are: (402) 547-6972 and (402) 547-8018. Share this information with Veterans and their families.

## **Grand Island Pharmacists Win "Mortar Bowl"**

VA NWIHCS, Grand Island pharmacy residents recently lectured at the 2010 Nebraska Pharmacists Convention in Lincoln. Dr. Lisa German's presentation was on the basics of insulin and insulin therapy. Dr. Chad Bartholomew presented on dyslipidemia and current treatment guidelines. Dr. Jamie

Herrmann reviewed hypertension guidelines and therapeutic management.

The VA NWIHCS, Grand Island Clinical Pharmacy team of Doctors Janelle Sellers, Lourdes Heuermann and Jamie Herrmann, known as "The Feds", won the 2010 Mortar Bowl. The Mortar Bowl is a pharmacy Jeopardy game with multiple teams of pharmacists competing to test their pharmacy and therapeutic knowledge.

## **HIV Testing**

Every year, the United States marks June 27 as National HIV Testing Day, a time to remind all Americans of the importance of early detection of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS. In 2010, VA is taking this one step further, setting aside an entire week, from June 27 to July 3, to promote HIV testing.

VHA is the largest single provider of HIV care in the United States, providing care to more than 23,000 Veterans with HIV in 2008. Yet, less than 10 percent of Veterans enrolled in VA health care have been tested for HIV. VHA's goal is to diagnose HIV as soon as possible so that Veterans can receive care provided by VHA and remain healthy for many years to come.

VA recommends that every Veteran patient be tested for HIV at least once in their lifetime. Routine voluntary HIV testing is now official VA policy.

## **OEF/OIF Welcome Home Event Planned for July**

The Operation Enduring Freedom/ Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans Welcome Home Event is scheduled for July 31 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event is being held at the Heartland Event Center in Grand Island, at 700 East Stolley Park Road.

Activities will include informational booths, promotional items, and family activities. Tickets for the Island Oasis Waterpark or the Stuhr Museum will also be provided for OEF/OIF Veterans and their immediate family members.

## **Chief of Medicine Is Retiring**

A retirement party will be held in the Education Conference Room June 24 from 1 to 3 p.m. for Dr. Laurel Preheim, Chief of Medicine. Dr. Preheim has been with VA for 35 years; eight years as chief of medicine. Although he is retiring July 3, he will still contribute to VA on a part-time basis. VA staff physician Dr. Gary Gorby has accepted the position of chief of medicine, beginning July 4.

## **Employees Receive 4-Hour Time-Off Award**

Congratulations to VA NWIHCS employees who helped reach the goal for the All Employee Survey (AES). The 90-percent participation mark was reached during the April-May 2010 all-employee forums. All employees will enjoy four hours off as a reward.

### **Tips for using your time off award**

- Time-off awards must be used by Nov. 19, 2010 and at one time (unless your daily tour is less than four hours in length).
- Employees may begin scheduling and using the time-off award with prior approval of their supervisor.
- Supervisors should handle requests to use the time-off award similar to other requests for time-off in your service.
- Employees employed on or before May 9, 2010, are eligible for the award.
- Intermittent, fee basis, students (without compensation) and trainees are excluded from the award.

## **Memorial Service Held for Former VA Physician**

A Memorial Service was held June 15 for Dr. Herbert Quigley, a former VA physician, who died recently. Dr. Quigley was with VA NWIHCS, Omaha for more than 30 years until his retirement in 2001.

Dr. Quigley taught pathology at Creighton's Medical School from 1968 until his retirement in 2003, the

-Continued on page 3

-Memorial continued from page 2

same year he was named professor emeritus. In his long career, he was honored many times. He received the Outstanding Teacher Award in the Department of Pathology in 2003. In 1990 he was presented with the Distinguished Teacher Award, the highest honor given by the faculty and students of the School of Medicine. Dr. Quigley also received the Medical School's Golden Apple Award in 1978 and again in 1996 for excellence in teaching.

## Online Application for Health Benefits

Veterans will find it easier and faster to apply for their health care benefits now that VA has updated its online Form 10-10EZ, Application for Health Benefits.

This revised online application provides enhanced navigation features that make it easier and faster for Veterans to apply for their health care benefits. This new version also allows Veterans to save a copy of the completed form for their personal records.

The most significant enhancement allows Veterans to save their application to their local desktop and

return to the application at any time without having to start over.

Veterans may complete or download the 10-10EZ form at VA health eligibility Web site at <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez>. Veterans may also contact VA at (877) 222-8387 (VETS) or visit the VA health eligibility Web site at [www.va.gov/healtheligibility](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility).

## myPay System Is Replacing Employee Express

VA will migrate from Employee Express (EEX) to myPay effective June 24.

MyPay is an innovative, automated system that electronically manages certain discretionary pay data items, and allows employees to view, print, and save leave and earning statements (LESs) and W-2s. The system is convenient and easy to use, anytime, anywhere, as long as users have access to the Internet. Every VA employee will have the ability to control many aspects of their pay account by tailoring their account to what they need.

### Users will have the option to:

- Create up to seven allotments
- Make changes to their deposits
- Change addresses

- Manage U.S. savings bonds, thrift savings plans (TSP), and more

## Enhancements through myPay:

- Provides users confirmation of changes/elections within three days versus 14 days with EEX
- Allows VA employees to view their LES on Thursday before payday
- Allows VA employees who are retired military or Reservists to access their military and civilian accounts with one personal identification number
- Allows VA employees to establish/change a limited access login for those who wish to grant another individual (such as a spouse) view access to his or her account
- Confirmation of all account changes is sent to a user's e-mail account.

Employees will have "view only" access to EEX to view and print historical data such as LES for pay covering May 12, 2007, through June 19, and W-2's for calendar years 2006 through 2009.

## VA Updates

### Omaha Medical Library

The VA NWIHCS, Omaha Medical Library (third floor) is now open. The library has resumed normal operations following a two-month remodeling project including painting, new carpeting and new furniture. Book shelves were also rearranged and relocated within the library. A grand opening event is planned.

## Take Precautions if You Have Been Affected by Flooding

The Douglas County Health Department has some recommendations for people who have been affected by the flooding along the Elkhorn River. These are helpful tips to know following any flood situation.

### Water Quality

- Never use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth or wash your hands, to wash or prepare food, make ice or make baby formula.

## Personnel Notes-Update

New nurse managers have been hired for the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and Step Down and the Emergency Department.

**Darren Parks** will be the new nurse manager for the ICU and Step Down, effective July 4. Darren has been with VA about a year, functioning as a clinical program coordinator for surgery. In this role, he has been involved in numerous educational and quality improvement projects for the surgery department as well as the entire nursing department.

Darren came to VA from Creighton University Medical Center. He has a strong background in critical care nursing and nursing management. He worked as a staff nurse in the ICU,

as a house supervisor and as a nurse manager.

**Loretta Pierce** will be the new nurse manager for the emergency department effective July 4. Loretta has been with VA about two years, serving as a nurse educator. In this role she has been instrumental in restructuring nursing orientation and competencies.

In particular, she has done a large amount of work incorporating simulation into nurse competencies. Loretta came to VA with a strong background in critical-care nursing and education. Loretta has a master's degree in nursing.

-Flood continued from page 3

- Make sure bottled water is from a safe source. If you don't know where it's from, boil or treat it before you use it.
- Boil water to kill harmful bacteria and parasites. Bringing water to a rolling boil for five minutes will kill most organisms. You can treat water with chlorine tablets, iodine tablets or unscented household chlorine bleach, but that will not kill parasitic organisms.
- Parents should keep children out of flood water. Wash children's hands frequently with treated water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Keep them away from contaminated toys that have not been disinfected.
- Private well owners should have their water tested once the flooding recedes.

### Food Safety

- Never eat food that may have come into contact with flood water: throw out all fresh meat, poultry, and produce.
- Dispose of any food without a waterproof container if there's a chance it may have come in contact with flood water.
- Food containers with screw caps, snap-lids, crimped caps (soda pop bottles) twist caps, flip tops, and home-canned foods should be discarded if they were in contact with flood water.

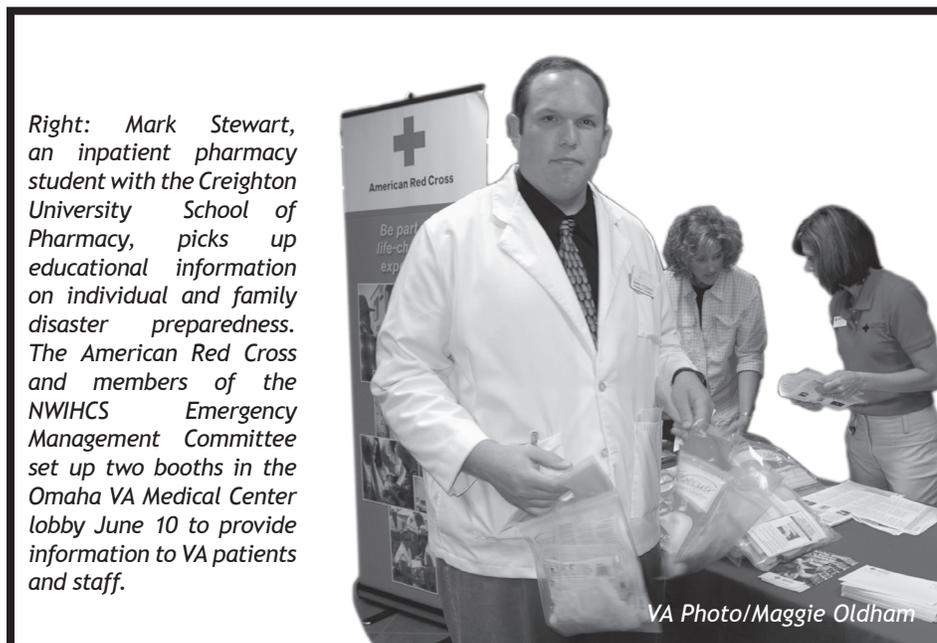
- Throw out anything in dented, leaking, bulging or rusted cans. The same goes for anything in an opened container or package.
- You may save and use undamaged, commercially canned foods if you remove the labels. Wash the cans in a strong detergent, using a scrub brush and immerse them for 15 minutes in a mix of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of room temperature water. Treat dishes and glassware the same way, but throw out anything with cracks.
- Put metal pans and utensils in boiling water for 10 minutes, but throw away wooden spoons, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples, and pacifiers. Only pre-made canned baby formula that requires no added water should be used for infants. Do not use powdered formulas made with treated water.

### Tetanus Shots

- Flooding creates high-risk conditions for tetanus. Tetanus bacteria often are found in the soil and dust that can wash into low-lying areas.
- Anyone who suffers an open wound, cut or deep puncture wound should contact a doctor. Tetanus usually requires hospitalization: death occurs in about three of 10 cases. The disease also is known as lockjaw: a booster shot is required every 10 years.

### Facts About Tetanus

- Symptoms include painful spasms and muscle tightening, usually all over the body.
- Those spasms can lead to the locking of the jaw so a person can't swallow or breathe.
- Tetanus cannot be transmitted from person to person.
- Immunity only comes from vaccination and not from surviving tetanus; if you had tetanus in the past, you still may need to get a tetanus shot.



*Right: Mark Stewart, an inpatient pharmacy student with the Creighton University School of Pharmacy, picks up educational information on individual and family disaster preparedness. The American Red Cross and members of the NWIHCS Emergency Management Committee set up two booths in the Omaha VA Medical Center lobby June 10 to provide information to VA patients and staff.*

VA Photo/Maggie Oldham

This newsletter is for VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (Grand Island, Lincoln, Omaha, Norfolk, Holdrege, North Platte, Bellevue, Nebraska and Shenandoah, Iowa). It is published weekly to provide employees, patients and visitors with information about VA programs and activities. This newsletter may be found on the Intranet at <http://vaww.visn23.med.va.gov/nwi/index.asp>. Submit news items through e-mail to G. POSTINGS in VistA or to VHANWI MESSENGER in Outlook by close of business each Tuesday.

For further information, call Maggie Oldham at (402) 995-5547.