



# NWII Messenger

For the week of June 28, 2010

## Omaha Patient Forum

Veterans are invited to attend a Patient Forum June 30 at VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (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, 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.

## VA NWIHCS Names New Chief of Medicine

Gary Gorby, M.D., was recently named the new chief of medicine for VA NWIHCS.

Dr. Gorby will assume the position effective July 4. He replaces Laurel Preheim, M.D., who is retiring after serving more than 35 years in the VA health care system, the past eight years as chief of medicine.

He will also be the Associate Chair of Medicine for VA at Creighton University School of Medicine and the University of Nebraska Medical Center when he assumes the chief of medicine position.

Gorby has been an infectious disease expert and staff physician at VA NWIHCS, Omaha for more than 20 years. He is board certified in internal medicine and infectious diseases. Gorby maintained an active research laboratory at the VA medical center until 2006 where he investigated the pathogenesis of gonococcal salpingitis through the



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application of molecular biology and computerized image analysis techniques.

Gorby has also been on the faculty at Creighton University School of Medicine since 1989, where he is the chief of adult

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## CALENDAR

### June

*Fireworks Safety Month*

*National Safety Month*

### July

*Ultraviolet (UV) 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

### October

*Breast Cancer Awareness Month*

*-Gorby continued from page 1*

infectious diseases and an associate professor of medical microbiology and immunology.

He is also a clinical associate professor at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Gorby is the program director for the adult infectious disease fellowship.

In 2002, he became co-director of the Center for Biopreparedness Education (now the Center for Preparedness Education), which educates Nebraska health care providers and first responders about potential terrorism and other public health threats.

Dr. Gorby has received myriad awards including the Creighton University School of Medicine Young Investigator Award and Innovative Use of Instructional Technology Award. He received the Distinguished Alumni Award from his medical school, and the Walter J. O'Donohue Award from the Nebraska chapter of the American College of Physicians.

## **Preheim Retires After Distinguished VA Career**

**Laurel C. Preheim, M.D.**, chief of medicine at VA NWIHCS, will retire July 3 after 35 years of caring for Veterans. Gary Gorby, M.D., will assume the chief of medicine position effective July 4.

Preheim has served Veterans in many capacities at VA NWIHCS, Omaha since starting as a staff physician in 1978, including roles as associate chief of medicine, chief of infectious diseases and epidemiologist.

He has also been associate chair, Department of Medicine, Creighton University School of Medicine since 1998. Preheim has served in many capacities at Creighton including chief, Infectious Disease Section, Department of Medical Microbiology and Immunology; director, Adult Infectious Diseases Fellowship Program; and professor of medical microbiology and immunology.

In addition, he has served in several roles at the University of Nebraska College of Medicine including chief, Infectious Disease Section, Department of Medicine; and professor of internal medicine.

**Rowen Zetterman, M.D.**, dean of the Creighton University School of Medicine, summed up the impact that Preheim's retirement will have at the school and VA NWIHCS.

"I have been fortunate to serve with Laurel Preheim as my friend and colleague at VA and Creighton University," said Zetterman, who was formerly the chief of staff at VA NWIHCS. "Both institutions will greatly miss his exceptional clinical skills and collaborative management approach."

Dr. Preheim has received myriad honors including being named on the Best Doctors in America list since 1996, Laureate Award and the Evergreen Award from the American College of Physicians, and Who's Who Among America's Teachers.

## **Shenandoah CBOC Welcomes New Physician**

Veterans who receive their care at the community based outpatient clinic (CBOC) in Shenandoah, Iowa, have a new primary care physician.

**Timothy Longacre, M.D.**, recently began his appointment as primary care physician for the clinic at 512 S. Fremont Street in Shenandoah.

Longacre replaced **James Billups, M.D.**, who was promoted to Associate Chief of Medicine for Primary Care at VA NWIHCS, Omaha. Billups helped open the clinic in February 2009.

Longacre comes to VA NWIHCS after practicing family medicine in the Bellevue and Omaha, Neb., area for more than 15 years.

He served 13 years in the U.S. Army Reserves as an emergency room physician and unit commander. A great interest in patient care led him back into training. Longacre completed a residency in family medicine at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in 1996. Concurrently, he joined the U.S. Air Force and served on active duty as a flight surgeon, primary care provider and a flight commander.

Longacre said he is "proud" of his more than 25 years of military service, where he served in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom and Enduring

Freedom. He deployed to the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Qatar and Diego Garcia.

"I am very excited about the Shenandoah CBOC opportunity," Longacre said. "I look forward to continuing my 25 years of practice by serving the Shenandoah Veteran community."

## **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.

## **A Special Thank You to Each Korean War Veteran**

During this year marking the 60th anniversary of the Korean War, the Republic of Korea wants to directly thank U.S. Veterans of the Korean War for their courageous service and sacrifice on behalf of freedom. A letter signed by the president of the Republic of Korea expressing that free nation's profound gratitude is available to each living Korean War Veteran and can be obtained at <http://eng.koreanwar60.go.kr/apply.asp> or by writing to: U.S. Branch ROK 60th AKW Commemoration Committee, 2450 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008.

The Korean War left the Korean Peninsula split into two nations - one free and prosperous; the other enslaved and starving. The Republic of Korea  
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*-Korean War continued from page 2*

to the south owes its freedom and prosperity to the armed forces of the United States and 21 other nations who took on North Korean and later Chinese Communist forces as they attacked the south on June 27, 1950, 60 years ago.

A permanent peace treaty formally ending the war has never been assigned. The Military Armistice Commission, composed of representative of both sides, North Korea and United Nations forces, continues to administer the armistice line and its four kilometer-wide (2 1/2 mile) demilitarized zone (DMZ) stretching across the Korean peninsula along the 38th parallel. Thousands of U.S. soldiers have served in Korean since the armistice was signed guarding the DMZ, along with Republic of Korea forces, under U.N. auspices. The armistice has maintained the peace with only minor incidents through four decades.

## **U.S. Senate Passes Resolution Designating National PTSD Awareness Day**

In an effort to bring greater attention to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the U.S. Senate passed a resolution last week authored by Sen. Kent Conrad designating June 27 as National PTSD Awareness Day.

“The stress of war can take a toll on one’s heart, mind and soul. While these wounds may be less visible than others, they are no less real,” Senator Conrad said. “All too many of our service men and women are returning from battle with PTSD symptoms like anxiety, anger, and depression. More must be done to educate our troops, Veterans, families and communities about this illness and the resources and treatments available to them.”

The senator developed the idea for a National PTSD Awareness Day after learning of the efforts of North Dakota National Guardsmen to draw attention to PTSD and pay tribute to U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Joe Biel, a friend and member of the 164th Engineer Combat Battalion. Biel suffered from PTSD

and took his life in April 2007 after returning to North Dakota following his second tour in Iraq.

He also met with friends of Sergeant Biel and presented them a copy of the resolution designating June 27—Biel’s birthday—as National PTSD Awareness Day.

According to the National Institute for Mental Health, PTSD is an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened. Traumatic events that may trigger PTSD include violent personal assaults, accidents, and military combat. From 2000 to 2009, approximately 76,000 Department of Defense patients were diagnosed with PTSD.

“This effort is about awareness, assuring our troops—past and present—that it’s okay to come forward and say they need help. We want to erase any stigma associated with PTSD. Our troops need to know it’s a sign of strength, not weakness, to seek assistance,” Senator Conrad said.

To learn more about PTSD and locate facilities offering assistance, visit the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ National Center for PTSD at <http://www.ptsd.va.gov>.

Veterans in need of immediate assistance can call the VHA Suicide Hotline at (800) 273-8255 and press 1.

## **You Spoke: We Listened**

### **More Parking Available for Veterans at VA NWIHCS, Omaha**



VA NWIHCS has increased the number of parking opportunities for patients at VA NWIHCS, Omaha.

**Parking Lot 1:** This lot is adjacent to the main hospital entrance and just north of the front circle. Parking is reserved (unless specifically posted by signage) for patients and guests Monday through Friday between 7 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. (excluding federal holidays).

**Service-Connected Lot:** This is the lot adjacent to the Emergency Department entrance. The entire lot is reserved for Emergency Department patients and service-connected Veterans

who are present for an appointment. The lot is reserved Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays, during the hours of 7 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. A gold parking placard is used to denote service connection.

**Lot between Bldg 5 (Human Resources) & Bldg 4 (Engineering):** This lot has handicapped parking spaces reserved specifically for employees with handicapped parking privileges denoted by a blue placard or a handicapped license plate. Except for two parking spaces marked with specific signage, the entire lot is for employee handicapped parking and reserved Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays, during the hours of 7 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. There are now three additional spaces for lift-equipped vehicles and eight additional handicapped spaces.

**Off-Site Parking:** VA NWIHCS leadership is actively looking for off-site parking that will be used for employee overflow parking. There are spaces available at the Center Mall. To facilitate pedestrian access, steps were constructed on the hill along Center Street. In addition, two shuttles provide transportation to and from the main parking lot and the Center Mall. Each shuttle driver has a cell telephone. Their numbers are 547-6972 or 547-8018.

The Omaha Parking Committee continues to explore options to ease the difficulties associated with finding a place to park at VA NWIHCS, Omaha.

## **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

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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).

## **myPay System Replaces Employee Express Pay System**

VA migrated to a new employee pay system June 24. Employee Express (EEX) has been replaced by myPay. MyPay is convenient and easy to use, anytime, anywhere, by users with access to the Internet.

Starting June 15, myPay began notifying VA employees (only employees without a myPay account) of their new myPay temporary passwords. Employees should not contact myPay staff members before they receive their temporary password. MyPay staff members cannot set up employees until the official temporary passwords have been sent.

Employees with a valid VA email address in PAID will be able to receive smartdocs notification emails from myPay, including their new temporary password. Employees without a valid [va.gov](http://www.va.gov) e-mail address in PAID will be notified by regular U.S. mail after June 23.

Employees should check their e-mail address printed on the bottom of their pay period 11 earnings statement and notify HR office immediately if their email address is missing or incorrect.

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.

## **Microsoft Office Home Use Program Offers Discount for VA Employees**

Employees can purchase Microsoft Office 2010 (Home Use Program) at a very low price (\$9.95 for download only or \$21.95 with DVD). The instructions on how to proceed are at <http://vaww.r02.portal.va.gov/sites/VISN%2023/Document%20Library/HomeUse.aspx>.

Although the Web page may still state this purchase is for Office 2007, once you click the link on the page, it will take you to the page listing the purchase for Office 2010. VA has not yet transitioned to Office 2010 and does not currently support Office 2010 applications. Microsoft Office 2010 is only for use at home.

## **Check Your Listing in the NWI Intranet Telephone Directory**

Telephone Operations is asking all employees to check their contact information in the intranet phone directory. Employees should visit <http://vaww.visn23.med.va.gov/nwi/Telephone/branch.asp>, select "Employee Extensions" from the drop-down menu, and enter their name to check the listing for errors or omissions. Services should also check their listing.

If you need to make a change, send an e-mail to [PhoneDirectory.NWIHCS@va.gov](mailto:PhoneDirectory.NWIHCS@va.gov) with the change.

## **Personnel Notes**

**James Mazurek** was selected as the Supervisory Biomedical Equipment Support Specialist (BESS) in Biomedical Engineering. Jim has been working at VA NWIHCS as a biomedical equipment support specialist since July 2008.

Previously, Jim served in the U.S. Air Force for 23 years. He started his career as a Medical Equipment Repair Specialist and held various positions including Clinical Engineering Branch Operations Chief at Landstuhl Army Medical Center, Germany. His last appointment was as a Medical Logistics Operations Manager at Offutt Air Force Base. Jim can be reached at Omaha, ext. 4468

## **Casual Wear**

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.

## **Employees Earn 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. Intermittent, fee basis, students (without compensation) and trainees are excluded from the award.

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.



The purpose of this survey is to seek feedback from employees, patients and other stakeholders of VA NWIHCS publications and communication mediums. **Your participation is voluntary and anonymous.**

Please return completed paper surveys to Maggie Oldham, Deputy Public Affairs Officer (OOPA) by July 15.

You may also mail your completed survey to:

VA NWIHCS Office of Public Affairs (OOPA), 4101 Woolworth Ave., Omaha, NE 68105.

Thank you for participating!

**1. How often do you read the NWIHCS Daily Briefs?**

Never		Occasionally		Frequently	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Have Access

**2. How much of the NWIHCS Daily Briefs do you read?**

Little		Some		All	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Have Access

**3. Which items in the NWIHCS Daily Briefs are most useful to you? Check as many as apply.**

- NWIHCS in the News
- VA News Bytes (VA news stories)
- VA items (Hey VA! Have You Heard? Links to VA News, Vanguard and the American Veteran)
- NWI Current Events
- Team NWI, Recognizing Employees
- Education Calendar
- NWI Omaha VA Employee Association Announcements
- Today in History
- Training and Education Links

**4. How could the NWIHCS Daily Briefs be improved?**

**5. How often do you read the NWI Messenger?**

Never		Occasionally		Frequently	
1	2	3	4	5	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Have Access

**6. How could the NWI Messenger be improved?**



**16. Where do you get most of your information about VA NWIHCS? Check as many as apply.**

- Employee grapevine, rumor mill or word of mouth
- Individual communication by your supervisor or service Chief
- Staff meetings
- Top Management/Leadership
- Employee Forums
- Daily Brief
- NWI Messenger*
- NWI NewsLink*
- Did You Know
- NWI Intranet Web Page
- NWI Internet (public) Web Page
- Outlook Email
- VistA Email
- Elevator Posters, Bulletin Boards, Display Cases
- Digital Media Boards

**17. Do you actively participate in social media (i.e., have a personal Facebook or Twitter account or write a blog)?**

- Yes  No

**18. List the social media sites in which you're actively involved.**

**19. Are you a follower of NWIHCS Twitter account (do you receive NWIHCS tweets?)**

- Yes  No

**20. Have you ever visited NWIHCS's Twitter Site?**

- Yes  No

**21. How often do you visit the NWIHCS Twitter page?**

- Never                                      Occasionally                                      Frequently
- 1                                      2                                      3                                      4                                      5                                       Don't Have Access

**The following questions are for demographic purposes only (for VA employees only).**

**22. Are you a supervisory or non-supervisory staff member?**

- Supervisory
- Non-Supervisory

**23. What are your work hours at VA NWIHCS?**

- Day Shift (between hours of 7 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.)
- Non-Day Shift
- Other
- N/A

**24. What is your role at VA NWIHCS?**

- Clinical
- Administrative/Support
- Other

**25. How long have you worked at VA NWIHCS?**

- 0-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-15 years
- 15+ years