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Serving Those Who Served **for 25 Years!**

The Official Newsletter of the Kentucky Department of
Veterans Affairs



In this month's issue...

Commissioner Corner

VA News

- New VA study to develop artificial intelligence that can predict aggressive prostate cancer

KDVA News and Events

- Veterans Program Trust Fund Meeting and Grants Awarded
- Polish Minister of Defense Lays Wreath at 9/11 Memorial
- Kentucky Veteran Cemeteries Reach New Milestone
- Care Packages for Homeless Veterans
- KDVA met with Illinois Dept. of Veterans Affairs

Upcoming Events

- KDVA Annual Commanders State Conference Aug. 24-25
- Kentucky State Fair (August)

Pact Act News

- Center for Women Veterans & Veterans Benefits Administration to hold PACT Act and Women Veterans Empowerment Virtual Event
- PACT Act Scam Information

Much, much more...

Commissioner's Corner

Commissioner's Corner



Greetings teammates,

August is a big month for my team at KDVA. We have our Annual Commanders State Conference on the 24th and 25th where we'll connect with leaders from Federal, State and local levels and Veteran Service Organizations to discuss veterans and how to better serve them. I can't begin to express how important this event is for us as we continue to develop stronger relationships with groups who serve veterans' interests.

Additionally our Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report will be available for anyone to review on our website later this month. FY 2024 will have plenty more opportunities for veterans to receive assistance in getting the benefits they've earned.

Very respectfully,
Commissioner Whitney P. Allen, Jr.
Kentucky Department of Veteran Affairs

Latest VA News



New VA study to develop artificial intelligence that can predict aggressive prostate cancer

July 3, 2023

By Erica Sprey
Writer-Editor, VA Research Communications

As part of a new research study that began July 1, five Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers are working together to develop an Artificial Intelligence algorithm that can predict if a case of prostate cancer might spread to other parts of the body.

Eventually expanding to 14 sites, the study will analyze data from more than 5,000 Veterans diagnosed with high-risk prostate cancer who have undergone initial treatment.

The new method will use diagnostic images (like MRIs), high resolution scans of prostate biopsies, and social determinants of health – which are variables like income and geographic location — to detect patterns indicative of aggressive prostate cancer. This data is all routinely obtained during the initial diagnosis and evaluation of a prostate cancer patient, so there will be no extra medical visits for the patient and minimal cost increase for the facility to use the AI.

Dr. Isla Garraway, Greater Los Angeles VA Medical Center (GLA) investigator, uses a stock photo on her workstation at GLA to demonstrate a prostate MRI. If the AI research is successful, predictive algorithms will be able to use routinely collected data like MRIs and biopsies to predict how aggressive a case of prostate cancer will be.

(Photo by Claudia Gutierrez.)



“Only in the VA can a researcher combine extensive electronic medical records, high-performance computing, and precision oncology care to create an innovation like this AI program,” said Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Discovery, Dr. Carolyn Clancy. “No one else has incorporated socioeconomic conditions into a predictive model for high-risk prostate cancer, but we’ve seen multiple studies showing how they are a factor in Veterans’ health.”

Investigators in the Predicting Metastatic Progression of High Risk Localized Prostate Cancer study are leveraging existing resources — such as cloud storage, computing infrastructure, and databases — that are unique to VA’s enterprise-wide programs. These programs include the Million Veteran Program and the Prostate Cancer Foundation-VA partnership, which was highlighted in the recent [PACT Act](#) and the [2023 OMNIBUS Appropriations ACT](#).

“A digital repository for data will allow for development, testing, and validation of prognostic classifiers that could positively impact clinical management of Veterans with high-risk prostate cancer,” said **Dr. Matthew Rettig, chief of oncology and hematology at the Greater Los Angeles VA Medical Center, and co-principal investigator for the study**. “The infrastructure developed by this research will serve as a valuable hub for future discovery and ... serve as a roadmap to develop similar AI algorithms for other cancers, such as lung cancer, and even non-cancerous diseases that commonly affect our Veterans.”

Prostate cancer is the second-most commonly diagnosed cancer among U.S. Veterans, making up 30% of new cancer diagnoses in the VA, and is the second leading cause of cancer-related mortality. About one in eight men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer at some point in their lifetime. For more information about the VA’s efforts in the battle against Prostate Cancer, please visit the [ORD Website](#).

What's New at KDVA?

**Veterans Program Trust Fund
Meeting Grants Awarded!**



(Carl Kaelin, the new vice-chairman for the KDVA Veterans Program Trust Fund, chairs his first meeting in Frankfort, KY, June 28, 2023. The program evaluates grant requests aimed towards helping veterans of the Commonwealth.)

The meeting was held in the Frankfort KDVA Conference Room on June 28th. The grants were announced by Governor Andy Beshear during his Press Conference livestream on July 13. The grants were awarded as below:

--The Kentucky Historical Society Foundation was awarded \$25,000 towards an exhibit featuring Kentucky's Women Veterans telling their stories through objects, images, documents and oral histories.

--The Warrior Battalion was awarded \$6,000. The Warrior Battalion provides emergency financial assistance each month as needed for medical, food, shelter, or any other emergency assistance for veterans directly to the need and not directly to the veteran.

--Kentucky Minuteman Relief Fund was awarded \$34,000 to assist Airmen and Soldiers of the Kentucky National Guard when unexpected emergencies arise as a result of their military service (housing, transportation, medical expenses, childcare, and more).

--National Association for Black Veterans was awarded \$13,800 to support the "Week of Valor" events, with the stipulation that the funds are not used to pay fee/salaries of security personnel or medical coverage of the events.

--Honor Flight Kentucky was awarded \$50,000 for their mission to provide veterans with flights to Washington D.C. to visit the various war memorials erected in honor of their service and sacrifice.

--Service Dog Solutions was awarded \$28,000 to train four service dogs over the next year that will be placed with four veterans in need.

--Horse Sensing was awarded \$15,000 to support veterans who live onsite while completing the organization's Equine Grooming Program. The funds go to support housing, grooming education, certification, and job placement.

--Disabled American Veterans Chapter 003 was awarded \$4,095 for the purchase of standard uniforms for funeral details, posting of colors, and other veteran events.

The total funds granted: \$175,895.

About the Veterans Program Trust Fund

The Kentucky General Assembly established the Veteran's Program Trust Fund (VPTF) as part of the Kentucky Vietnam Veterans' Bonus Act on December 23, 1988. The purpose of the VPTF is to direct funding to projects and programs that help Kentucky's veterans for which other funds are not available.

The VPTF is overseen by a Board of Directors whose members are appointed by the Governor.

The Trust Fund supports many veterans programs and projects throughout the Commonwealth, like the University of Louisville's [free behavioral health clinic for veterans](#).

VPTF has received a steady, moderate-income from a \$5.00 fee that is included in the initial purchase price and renewal of Veterans' License Plates. The VPTF is also a legal recipient of tax-deductible contributions from individuals, companies and organizations. Donations to the Trust Fund are tax-deductible. Such contributions may be made through the VPTF check-off box on the Kentucky Income Tax form, directly to the VPTF through personal checks to the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs, or securely online. Kentucky's Veterans Service Organizations have contributed generously to the VPTF since its creation and continue to do so. Donors may also specify that their contribution goes to one of several specific programs/facilities KDVA operates for the benefit of veterans:

Charitable contributions to governmental units are tax-deductible under section 170(c)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code if made for a public purpose.

The information above is available on our website here and also lists a few requests that would be prohibited: <https://veterans.ky.gov/veterans-trust-fund/Pages/default.aspx>

KDVA meets with Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs



KDVA team met with Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs Executive Director, Terry Prince, and his team to exchange ideas, discuss best practices and share lessons learned in how we can better support our state veterans and their families.

Polish Minister of Defense Lays Wreath at 9/11 Memorial





(Photos above by Kentucky Veteran Cemetery Central Staff)

On July 17, 2023, the Polish Minister of Defense Mariusz Błaszczak, visited the 9/11 Memorial at the Kentucky Veterans Cemetery Central in Radcliff, KY to lay a wreath.



U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Raymond S. Harris, V Corps command sergeant major, U.S. Army Lt. Gen. John S. Kolasheski, V Corps commanding general, and Polish Minister

of National Defense Mariusz Błaszczak converse near Fort Knox's welcome sign, Fort Knox, Kentucky, July 17, 2023. Błaszczak is visiting V Corps to attend V Corps' Victory Honors ceremony on July 18 for Polish Maj. Gen. Adam Joks, outgoing deputy commanding general of interoperability, and Maj. Gen. Maciej W. Jablonski, incoming deputy commanding general of interoperability. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Devin Klecan)

Kentucky Veteran Cemeteries Reach New Milestone

On July 3rd the cemeteries division conducted its 20,000th interment. Since the first interment at Kentucky's first Veterans Cemetery, Kentucky Veterans Cemetery West(KVCW) in 2004, the five State Veterans Cemeteries have conducted 20,000 honorable and dignified interments for our veterans and eligible family members. KVCW has conducted 6,103 interments, KVCC has completed 9,343, KVCN has conducted 2,674 interments, KVCNE has completed 1,759 interments and KVCSE has completed 121 interment since they opened in 2018. This closing fiscal year the SVC Division conducted 1,564 honorable and dignified interments.



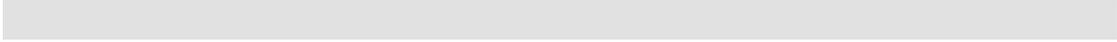
No Wait Time for Interments:

Over the past fiscal year the Cemeteries Division has worked hard to cut down the wait time for deceased veterans/ family members to be interred at one of Kentucky's five State Veteran Cemeteries (SVC) . Over the final 2 month of FY 23 there has been no wait time for an interment date.

Care Packages for Homeless Veterans

On July 21, KDVA staff picked up 40 care packages from the Corning plant in Harrodsburg, KY. The care packages include essentials and goods to be provided to homeless veterans as part of our Homeless Veterans Program.





Latest PACT Act News



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Office of Rural Engagement

Center for Women Veterans & Veterans Benefits Administration to hold PACT Act and Women Veterans Empowerment Virtual Event

Event to be held Friday August 4, 2023 from 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. ET

The Center for Women Veterans and the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) invite you to join in a Virtual Exchange & Women Veterans Empowerment PACT Act event. VBA will give an overview of PACT Act and you will learn how to apply for PACT Act - related benefits or submit an intent to file, enroll in VA health care, where to get screened for toxic exposures, and more.

[Register](#)

WOMEN VETERANS
IMPORTANT INFORMATION YOU NEED TO KNOW.

The **new PACT Act** offers toxic exposure screenings for all Veterans, who were exposed to burn pits and other toxins.

A variety of reproductive health concerns are now considered presumptive conditions including ovarian, uterine, cervical and breast cancers.

GET YOUR TOXIC EXPOSURE SCREENING

1-800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411)
Find out more at <https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/>

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

The advertisement features a smiling woman wearing a dark blue "U.S. ARMY VETERAN" cap. The background is dark blue with yellow and white text. There are icons of a hard hat and a tag with a star.

[Register](#)



BE VIGILANT OF PACT ACT SCAMS

On August 10, President Biden signed the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act (PACT Act) into law. This law helps millions of Veterans and their survivors by:

- Extending VA health care eligibility for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and Post-9/11 (Post-September 11, 2001) eras
- Expanding benefits eligibility for Veterans exposed to toxic substances and their survivors



Tips to Avoid PACT Act Scams

Scammers are taking advantage of new opportunities to commit fraud. There's been an increase in PACT Act-related [phishing \(email\)](#), vishing (phone), and [social media scams](#) targeting Veterans to access their PACT Act benefits or submit claims on their behalf.

Veterans should be cautious of anyone who guarantees a lucrative financial benefit or service.

Do's

- ✓ You may submit your application securely [online](#) via VA.GOV or in person at any Regional Office. You may file your claim directly with VA and then, VA will assist in gathering evidence necessary to support it. There are no costs or hidden fees to apply.
- ✓ Be cautious of companies who advertise VA benefits can only be obtained with their help. These companies may not be recognized by VA and may be attempting to charge illegal fees.
- ✓ Be cautious of aggressive companies who may try to pressure you to sign their contract through frequent communications or by insisting "you must act now or lose your chance for benefits."
- ✓ Be cautious of companies who claim to be contacting you on behalf of VA or to have a special relationship with VA. Contact VA at 1-800-827-1000 if you are unsure about the authenticity of any message received.
- ✓ Validate: If you are interested in working with a Veteran Service Organization (VSO), agent, or attorney, use the Office of General Counsel [Accreditation tool](#) to confirm and validate their credentials.

Don'ts

- ✗ Do not sign a contract agreeing to pay an unauthorized company a percentage of your benefit payment in exchange for their assistance with your VA claim. If you need help filing a claim, there are representatives of VSOs, agents, and attorneys who have been [accredited by VA](#) to assist you.
- ✗ Do not sign a blank form for someone else to complete later. Always review the completed form before signing and keep a copy for yourself.
- ✗ Do not be fooled by companies who advertise they have special relationships with medical professionals and can guarantee your benefits award. If they are defrauding the Federal government, you could be held responsible for paying those benefits back.
- ✗ Do not provide your social security number, medical records, or other personally identifiable information to anyone offering claims assistance before confirming their credentials using the Office of General Counsel [Accreditation tool](#).
- ✗ Do not sign forms that are not [VA generated](#) or third-party authorization for someone to provide "behind-the-scenes" claims assistance.

www.VA.gov/PACT is the official source of PACT Act information.

We want Veterans and survivors to apply now for their PACT Act-related benefits.

To report suspected scams, please contact the VA Office of Inspector General ([OIG Hotline \(va.gov\)](#)). File a complaint with the [Federal Trade Commission](#). Visit the [Cybercrime Support Network](#) for additional [resources](#) to help Veterans, service members, and their families combat cybercrime.

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Learn more and sign up at VA.gov/PACT
Download the VA Health and Benefits App
Call us at 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411)
Find a VA at VA.gov/find-locations/

Useful VA Links

- **VA Housing Assistance Page** - Information about home loans, eligibility, interest rates reductions and other related topics: <https://www.va.gov/housing-assistance/>
- **National Center for PTSD** - Provides information and resources to veterans, care providers and organizations relating PTSD: <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/>
- **Covid-19 Vaccine Updates** - Latest updates on Covid-19 guidance and vaccinations: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/>
- **VA Life Insurance (VALife)** - <https://www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/valife.asp>
- **Veterans Readiness and Employment (VR&E)** - job training, education, employment coaching, etc.: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/index.asp>

Upcoming Veterans Dates and Events

- Anti-terrorism Awareness Month (**August**)
- Coast Guard Day (**August 4**)
- Purple Heart Day (**August 7**)
- U.S. Department of Defense Birthday (**August 10**)
- Agent Orange Awareness Day (**August 10**)
- Navajo Code Talkers Day (**August 14**)
- National Airborne Day (**August 16**)
- Marine Corps Reserve Birthday (**August 29**)

Resources for Veterans



Flood Relief

Have you been affected by flooding in Eastern Kentucky? The Governor's Office has prepared a list of resources designed to help you make it through this challenging time.

Click here for more information:

<https://governor.ky.gov/disaster-response/flood-resources>

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