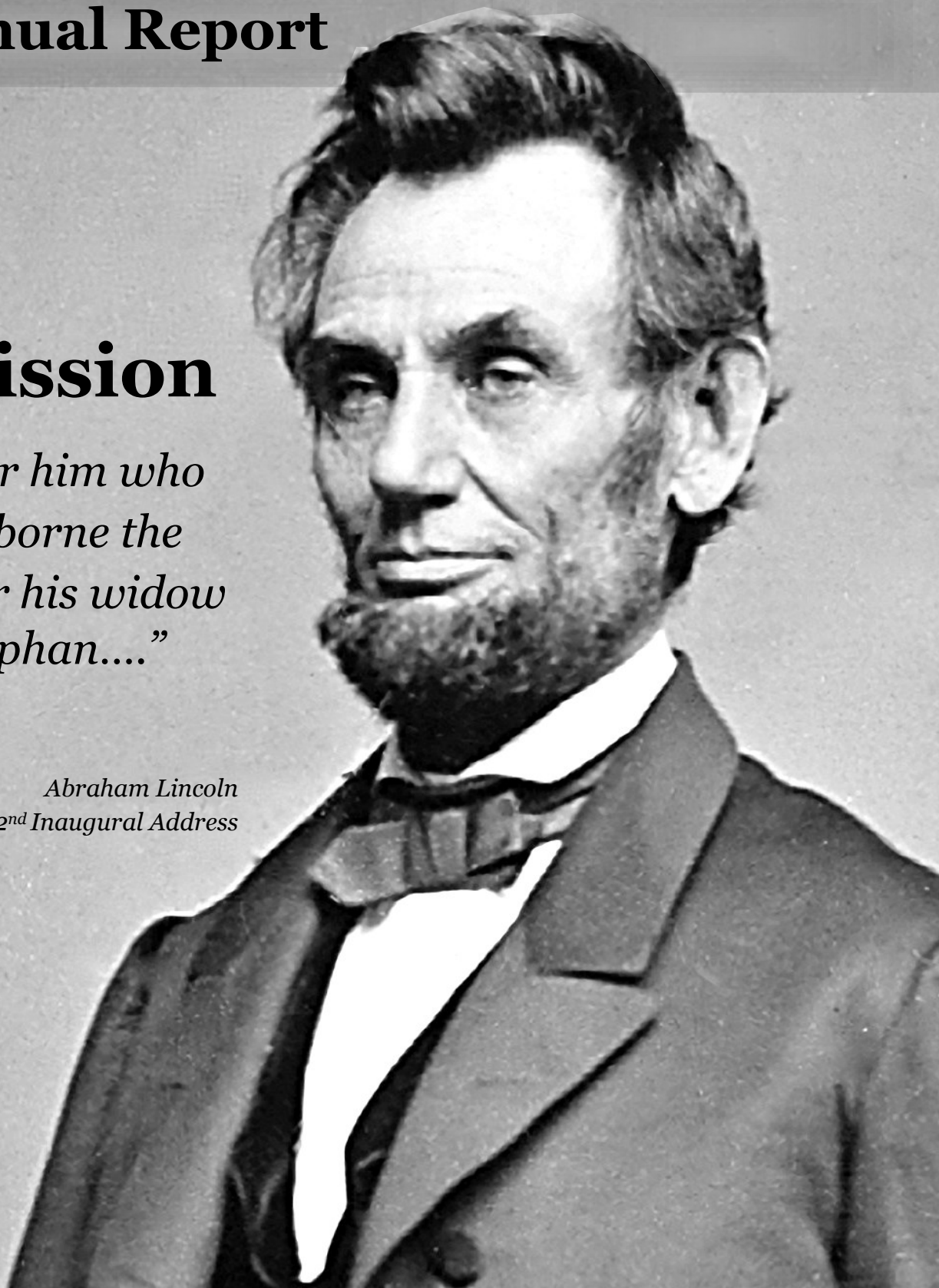
VA HEALTH CARE | Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

Lexington VA Medical Center

2014 Annual Report



Our Mission

"...to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan...."

Abraham Lincoln
2nd Inaugural Address

Our Executive Leadership Team

Emma Metcalf, MSN, RN
Director

James Belmont, FACHE, CAAMA
Associate Director

Patricia Breeden, MD
Chief of Staff

M. Kelly McCullough, MSN, RN
Associate Director Patient Care

Dear Veterans, Staff, Volunteers, and Friends:

As I reflect upon the events of the momentous past year, my thoughts first turn gratefully to our Veterans, their families, and our stakeholders for their belief in and support of the Lexington VA Medical Center. The backing and encouragement they have provided is a blessing and is what makes this medical center so very special.

Last year was a busy and remarkable year for us in many ways. We have grown, overcome challenges, and achieved many good things. We were approved for a Fisher House and Building Utilization Review and Repurposing (BURR) initiative that will help us better meet the needs of Veterans and their families, opened telemental health sites in Corbin and Richmond, Kentucky, participated in a record number of outreach events, and strengthened relationships with stakeholders. We listened to your suggestions, comments, and concerns, which has helped guide our decisions and shape the way we provide care. I hope you will continue to share your insights and perspectives with me in the new year.

While we have accomplished a great deal as a team, we still have so much more to do. We need to increase the number of Veterans we serve and continue in our journey to become more patient-centered and transparent, always acting in the absolute best interests of those we serve.

On the road ahead, we will passionately carry on with our work, making sure that everything we do reflects our core values and characteristics. We will keep our momentum going by vigorously rolling out our 2015 initiatives and continuing to ***"do great things for our Veterans."*** It is a privilege to serve our Nation's patriots.

Emma Metcalf
Medical Center Director

2014 Snapshot

Staff: 1,866

Budget: $299m

Operating Beds: 189

Unique Veterans Served: 37,000+

Women Veterans Served: 1,840+

Inpatient Admissions: 5,240

Nursing Home Admissions: 385

Outpatient Visits: 472,000+

I CARE
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Integrity

We make decisions and choose our actions based on our core values and characteristics. Acting with integrity is critical to everything we do because it is the foundation of trustworthiness.

Keeping the Promise "…to care for him who shall have borne the battle…"
Our responsibility to Veterans, their families, and our stakeholders, led us to develop five key business drivers that are aligned with the Veterans Health Administration's Blueprint for Excellence and support our pledge to the highest business standards and practices. These key business drivers guide our daily operations, decisions, and future direction. They are:

- **Veteran Centered Care**: Engagement, Service Recovery, Technology, Satisfaction
- **Safety and Quality**: Mortality, Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set, Improving Outcomes
- **Access**: Supply and Demand, Network Initiatives, Primary Care Team Focused on Geriatric Care, Non-Institutional Care, Telemental Health, Missed Opportunities
- **Workforce Excellence and Engagement**: Awards, Recognition, Training/Mentoring/Education
- **Financial Stewardship**: Outreach, Documentation, Coding, Productivity, Outreach, Documentation/Coding/Workload Capture

Our Scheduling Practices
Our schedulers consistently fulfill their duties with the utmost care. Their constant attention to detail and adherence to the highest business standards help us to increase access by scheduling appointments, updating cancellations, and rescheduling in accordance with the timing needs of Veterans and staff availability.

Through integrity in our business practices, Veterans are getting the care they need when they need it.

Great service recovery is not moved up the ladder or passed to a supervisor to be handled another day.

Service Recovery
In 2014, we rolled out our service-level patient advocate program. All staff members bear the responsibility of treating Veterans with respect, resolving their concerns, and ensuring their experience is the best that it can be.

Commitment

Our commitment goes beyond being dedicated to our mission to care for our Nation's Veterans. We are fueled by a passion that inspires us to continue pursuing excellence in all that we do. Meet some of our committed employees!

James Fetter, MD
Mental Health
30 years

Ron Hurrigan
Logistics
30 years

Diane Martin
Patient Care
30 years

Marquitte Owens
Nutrition and Food
40 years

Our volunteers, veteran service organizations, and other stakeholders also play an important role in providing care and comfort to the Veterans we serve through their volunteerism and donations. In 2014, the total value of volunteer hours, and monetary, material, and activity donations was... **$1,224, 999.00!**

Wes Ruiz
Medicine
30 years

Arlene McCann
Health Administration
35 years

Sheri King
Quality
35 years

Robert Relford
Environmental Management
40 years

Advocacy

Being truly patient-centered includes advancing the interests of Veterans and other beneficiaries continuously and in creative ways that support Veterans and the communities in which they live.

** Freedom Farmers Market * Stand Down for the Homeless **
** Marine Mega Muster * Vets First Health Care & Benefits Bazaar * Phone-a-thon **
** Army National Guard Post Deployment Sessions * Military Appreciation Days **
** Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion health fairs **

Freedom Farmers Market in partnership with Kentucky Proud and Homegrown by Heroes
Through a partnership with our local community and farmers who are Veterans, we hosted bi-monthly farmers markets at our Leestown Division during the summer months.

Stand Down for the Homeless
Our annual stand down brings federal, state, community agencies, and members of our staff together under the same roof to provide homeless Veterans with free health screenings, flu shots, and information about VA health care, education and employment opportunities, and other benefits and resources.

Marine Mega Muster
About 450 Marines learned about VA health care benefits from our staff who were on hand to answer questions and enroll them.

We received a special thank you from them with remarks that they had never received this much support from a VA, considered this a best practice, and would be using us as their model for future musters!

Respect

Our approach is simple—we believe all Veterans should be treated with the utmost dignity and respect, and honored for their service and sacrifice.

** National Salute * 69th Anniversary of Iwo Jima * Memorial Day **
** Bluegrass Honor Flight * Women's Health Fair * 4th of July Parade **
** Welcome Home Celebration * POW/MIA Recognition Day **

Bluegrass Honor Flight
On the 70th anniversary of D-Day, the Honor Flight Bluegrass Chapter provided 80 World War II and Korean War Veterans an honor flight to the military monuments in Washington, D.C.

This honor flight's maiden voyage out of Lexington was the first and perhaps only trip for these Veterans to see the war memorials in their honor. Some of our staff accompanied them.

Annual Welcome Home
Our returning Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn Veterans and their families were treated to a double-header featuring the Wounded Warriors baseball team. Between innings, each branch of the military was honored. Following the game, the Wounded Warriors joined VA staff for dinner and an evening of camaraderie.

POW/MIA Ceremony
We paid special tribute to some of Kentucky's former prisoners of war along with those who remain missing in action at our annual POW/MIA Recognition Day program, which included a private catered luncheon and was emceed by local news anchor Tom Kenny.

Excellence

Our goal is to provide a health care experience that surpasses ordinary standards and the expectations of our Veterans.

Dr. Edward Marshall, Harold Rowan, Jaime Medlin, Canine Rescue

Meet Army Veteran Harold Rowan, who, after a series of unfortunate events, found himself in poor health and struggling to care for himself and his three dogs. "I was homeless living in a van with my dogs," said Rowan.

As his health conditions worsened, Rowan finally sought medical care with us. While his physical healing began to progress, he lamented daily about the well being of his beloved pets, which he had at a boarding facility before being admitted into the Community Living Center. "I couldn't sleep at night. It felt like I had failed my dogs," said Rowan. Sensing Rowan's unhappiness, Dr. Edward Marshall, staff psychologist, asked what was troubling him.

After learning the disposition of Rowan's pets, Dr. Marshall quickly contacted Homeward Bound Canine Rescue and Rehabilitation to get his dogs placed with a temporary foster family and reunite them prior to their going to the foster family. Rowan and his cherished dogs took immediate comfort in one another's company. "I've been through so much with these dogs," said Rowan.

Providing excellence in care involves transforming the relationship between providers and patients into a patient-provider partnership that considers the patient's unique concerns, preferences, and values. In Rowan's case, this included the welfare of his family pets.

Providing personalized, proactive, patient-driven care empowers all of us to see Veterans as individuals to be cared for and not medical conditions to be treated.

Mr. Rowan and his dog Jack

No doubt, the connection between humans and canines can be very powerful. That is why we strive to do all that we can for the Veterans we serve. For Rowan, simply knowing his pets were being well cared for in his absence made a big difference in his recuperation.

Trustworthy

Trustworthy means being able to be relied on as honest or truthful. An essential aspect of this characteristic is a culture of transparency.

Transparency with Staff
We foster open communication through several venues including regular staff meetings, town halls, public speaking engagements, monthly service level and Gemba visits to huddle boards, and meetings with new employees on their one year anniversary.

In 2014, our Director began a new blog to encourage discussion about important topics like patient-centered care, civility, behavior and attitudes, customer service, and teamwork.

We also launched an employee newsletter, *The Pulse*, which won a coveted Aster Award (Silver) in the 2014 Aster Award competition. The Aster Awards program is an elite competition recognizing the Nation's most talented health care marketing professionals for outstanding excellence in advertising.

"We are all leaders. We can all do great things for our Veterans."

~ Emma Metcalf

Transparency with Stakeholders
To become more responsive to our stakeholders, we hosted monthly Listening Sessions and public town forums with Veterans, veteran service organizations, and our legislative partners. We also invited Veterans to participate in strategic planning sessions and other work groups.

Transparency with the Media
We believe that we serve our Veterans' best interests by forging strong, positive relationships with members of the media.

In 2014, a local newspaper launched an investigation into Veteran satisfaction at our VA clinic in Morehead, Kentucky. The publisher reported numerous positive comments from Veterans about their VA care during his research and reported these findings in four articles.

While we are always obligated to protect patient confidentiality first, we demonstrate our integrity by being as responsive and transparent as possible without violating patient privacy.

Accessible

Our goal is to facilitate Veterans' use of our services by making them readily available.

To improve access and meet the growing demand for VA health care services, we:

- Decreased the average wait time for new patients to receive Primary Care appointments from 39 days in January to 28 days in September by adding weekend clinics and hiring additional staff
- Incorporated patient aligned care team principles into specialty care
- Added additional clerks and nurses to primary care and our specialty patient aligned care teams
- Added an additional patient aligned care team at our community-based outpatient clinic in Morehead
- Added audiology service at our community-based outpatient clinic in Berea
- Activated mental health sites in Corbin and Richmond, Kentucky
- Expanded home-based primary care service to over 460 patients (up from 368 patients)
- Made telemental health services available at our community-based outpatient clinics
- Met five out of six patient aligned care team performance measures ending 2014 as the 5th highest performing VA in the Nation!

Veterans Transportation System

Improving access to care is one of our highest priorities. Our Veterans Transportation program helps Veterans get to and from their VA appointments. Each time a Veteran is transported to care it improves their quality of life and their health. The primary method of measuring our transportation-related access to care efforts is through documenting rides provided.

Quality

Quality is providing the highest standard of care possible while constantly seeking ways to improve in everything that we do.

Reaching for the Stars
In 2014, we were visited by the staff from the Office of the Inspector General, underwent three Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facility reviews, a Police Service line review, a privacy review, and a long term care review, all of which we did well with. We also underwent an access audit focusing on our scheduling practices, which confirmed our commitment to principled, accountable, and transparent business practices.

We were also ranked four stars for quality on the Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) report, which tracks outcomes and ranks VA facilities on quality and efficiency, using stars [one star (lowest) to five stars (highest)]. We achieved the most improved facility for three quarters in a row!

And, of 180 VA-wide performance indicators, we met 108, with significant forward progress in a number of areas. So while there is still plenty of work for us to do, we are definitely sailing in the right direction!

In 2014, we initiated 10 new system redesign projects, 19 management guidance teams projects, activated our new visual room, and to date have trained 397 employees in Lean techniques.

Huddle Boards
We use visual huddle boards in our departments to display improvement opportunities, which are categorized by our five key business drivers. Staff post their ideas on the boards for discussion at the huddle. Huddle boards are used in 78% of our services.

Gemba
Gemba refers to "going to where the work is done." Each week, the executive leadership team visits a service huddle to gain insight into their challenges and opportunities.

Innovative

Advancements in modern medicine, research, and technology help us to improve our ability to continuously meet the needs of our Veterans.

da Vinci
We are proud to be the first VA facility in Kentucky to acquire the da Vinci Xi Surgical System. This technology is used across a spectrum of minimally invasive surgical procedures and optimized for multi-quadrant surgeries in the areas of urology, thoracic, cardiac, and general surgery. The da Vinci Surgical System presents Veterans with additional surgical options and offers the following benefits.

- Shorter hospital stay
- Less blood loss
- Fewer complications
- Less need for narcotic pain medicine
- Faster recovery
- Minimal scarring

We were among the first hospitals in Kentucky to implant the Boston Scientific S-ICD® System, the world's first and only commercially available subcutaneous implantable defibrillator (S-ICD) for the treatment of patients at risk for sudden cardiac arrest.

We now use computer kiosks to automate the way Veterans, volunteers, contractors, vendors, and sales representatives check in. Veterans can also obtain their appointment information. Kiosks are located in the front lobbies of both divisions across from our information desks.

Agile

Our fourth congressionally mandated mission is to support our Nation in the event of a national disaster, which requires agility and flexibility.

We're Best When Prepared for the Worst
In 2014, we worked with our community responders (fire, emergency services, Fayette County Emergency Management, community hospitals, and organizations like the American Red Cross), in simulated exercises involving activation of the National Disaster Medical System (at Bluegrass Airport), an Ebola outbreak, and a sarin gas leak (Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program). These exercises allow us to train new staff, test new equipment and technology, share knowledge and expertise, enhance communication, identify available resources within our region, and be better poised to serve our Veterans and community.

Ebola Readiness
As the Ebola crisis in West Africa gained the world's attention, we sprang into action quickly organizing an Ebola Response Team, and developing an integrated plan to increase Ebola readiness, promote situational awareness, screen patients, and educate and train staff. We met with community health care providers and first responders to plan for possible Ebola patients. Our ability to anticipate and adapt quickly to this evolving epidemic as well as other emergencies allows us to meet new challenges and requirements while maintaining daily operations and providing seamless, uninterrupted care.

Integrated

Integrated care addresses the Veteran's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs across the full spectrum of care.

Complementary and Integrative Medicine
Recognizing that conventional medicine can be augmented through complementary services, we implemented several new pilot programs. We trained our community living center staff in the art of healing touch to provide relaxation. Our residential rehabilitation treatment program offers several group yoga classes each week. Our Chaplain Service offers meditation, relaxation, and reflection with a labyrinth. Through a rural health grant, our Chaplain Service expanded services through our home-based primary care program to one of our community-based outpatient clinics. We also trained several providers in acupuncture with plans to add these services in the upcoming year.

Our Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program is an integral component of our holistic approach to medicine and healing. Our Veterans benefit from pastoral visits by the seminarians and community clergy in our CPE training program who offer spiritual support.

We were the first pilot site in our network to implement a Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program. This team works in partnership with Veterans and works along with the support person of their choice to help them reach their mental health goals.

We continue to increase our emphasis on patient-centered care through our Patient Aligned Care Teams. A key feature of these teams is the long-term partnership our health care professionals develop with their patients while focusing on their best interests, personal preferences, and coordinating their care.

2015

Leestown Division
Established 1931

Cooper Division
Established 1973
MEDICAL CENTER
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEDICAL CENTER COOPER DIVISION

The Road Ahead

We are part of the VA MidSouth Healthcare Network and serve a Veteran population of more than 90,000. Our destination is a five-star ranking in quality and efficiency and unparalleled customer service. Our journey ahead includes a number of projects to help us achieve our goals. Here are just a few.

Leestown
Renovation of several patient care areas along with construction of a new community living center to provide increased access to the geriatric care our Veterans need. Renovation includes dedicated and expanded space for women's health, GeriPACT clinic space, and a dedicated mental health wing for inpatient and outpatient care.

Fisher House
Our 2014 application for a Fisher House was approved and we will begin the next steps. Fisher Houses provide families of Veterans with housing close to their loved ones during hospitalization. These facilities greatly reduce out-of-pocket expenses for lodging, food, and transportation for Veterans' families, while providing them a "home away from home."

BURR Initiative
Our 2014 application for a BURR initiative was also approved. This is an enhanced lease project that allows construction of transitional housing for homeless Veterans.

Cooper Division
In 2014, we renovated our 4 South inpatient unit to be more home-like for the enhanced comfort of our Veterans. We also activated our Ambulatory Procedure Unit, received approval to move forward with CT Surgery, and will begin construction of our 5th floor addition for administrative services so we can expand clinical services on the 1st floor for better accessibility.

On the Horizon
We have proposed expansion of our community-based outpatient clinic in Somerset, Kentucky. We have also proposed establishing contracted clinics in Corbin and Danville, Kentucky, to improve access to our services and meet the needs of Veterans in these areas.

VA HEALTH CARE | HONORING SERVICE EMPOWERING HEALTH

This is an official publication of the Lexington VA Medical Center. Please direct comments to Public Affairs at (859) 281-4814.
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Proudly Serving Veterans Since 1931

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