



# Winter is coming and so is flu season

New CDC study: Influenza vaccination reduces risk of hospitalization by more than half among seniors

Courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

A CDC study recently published in the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases* provides more evidence on the benefits of flu vaccination among older adults.

The study looked at flu-associated hospitalizations among people 50 and older during the 2010-2011 flu season and found that people who had gotten a flu vaccine reduced their risk of flu-associated hospitalization by half.

People 65 and older are at high risk of serious flu complications and account for the majority of flu hospitalizations and deaths each year.

The CID study "Case-control study of vaccine effectiveness in preventing laboratory-confirmed influenza hospitalizations in older adults, United States, 2010-11," cites data from three recent influenza seasons, during which an estimated 115,000 to 630,000 hospitalizations and 5,000 to 27,000 deaths occurred.

It's estimated that people 65 and older accounted for between 54 percent and 71 percent of hospitalizations and between 71 percent and 85 percent of deaths.

The study, which compared 368 flu-hospitalized patients and compared them against case controls selected from the community, found that vaccinated people 50 years and older

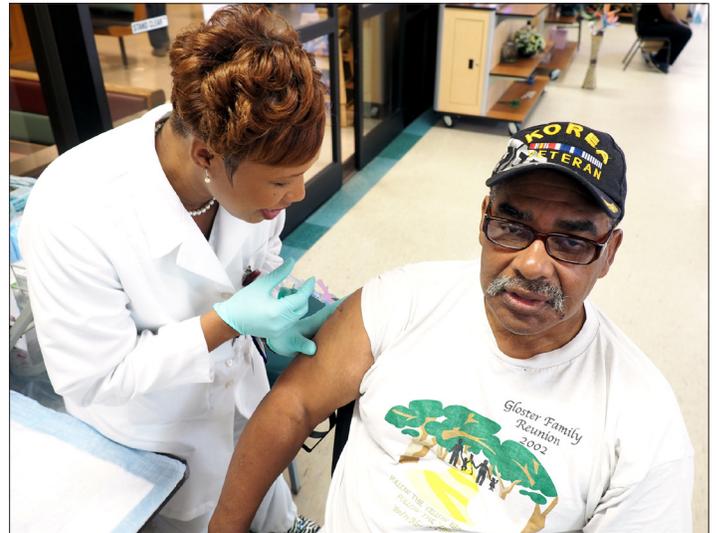


photo by Bob Hall, Dorn VAMC public affairs specialist

Army Veteran Arthur Gilley gets his flu shot at the Dorn VAMC Sept. 29. Each year, the flu causes more than 226,000 hospitalizations and nearly 36,000 death in the United States alone.

were 57 percent less likely to be hospitalized from flu than unvaccinated people.

The benefits were similar by age group, including adults 75 years and older. This is a notable finding since flu effec-

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## Should I get the flu vaccine?

Yes. Influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and death. Even healthy people can get sick from the flu and spread it to others.

The flu shot is recommended for all persons aged 6 months and older with rare exception.

## Where can I go to get my flu shot?

- Dorn VAMC Primary Care Clinics and all community-based outpatient clinics Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Dorn VAMC Mental Health clinics Tuesday through Thursday between 9 and 11 a.m. or 1 and 2 p.m.
- Any local Walgreens (You will need to take your VA ID and any other picture ID with you.)

## Already got your shot from another facility?

If you have already received your flu vaccination from another facility ... not at the Dorn VAMC or one of Dorn's community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs), please alert your Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) to ensure your vaccination record is updated in your medical records to reflect month and location of flu vaccination. This information may be faxed to (803) 695-7904.

## News Briefs

### Get the *Palmetto Post* at home

There are two ways to view the *Palmetto Post* at home. The Veteran's newsletter is available on the Internet at [www.columbiasc.va.gov/Palmetto\\_Post/Palmetto\\_Post.asp](http://www.columbiasc.va.gov/Palmetto_Post/Palmetto_Post.asp).

Veterans can also sign up to receive the newsletter via email by simply sending an email to [vhacmsdornpa@va.gov](mailto:vhacmsdornpa@va.gov). Be sure to enter *Palmetto Post* in the email subject line.

### New Patient Orientation

A Health Benefits Seminar designed to help Veterans new to Dorn VAMC is scheduled for the third Tuesday of every month and is hosted in the Dorn VAMC auditorium (Building 5).

The orientation was established to inform new patients how to access services within Dorn VAMC. You will be

provided a booklet of crucial information to ensure your transition into VA is a smooth one.

Registration for this seminar is not required.

For additional information, please contact Evetta Gregg, director of Stakeholder Relations, (803) 776-4000 (ext. 7696).

### Tobacco treatment expanded

The Dorn VAMC is now offering an additional day and time for the Tobacco Treatment Group. This group will now not only be offered every Wednesday from 2 to 3 p.m. (located in Bldg. 103; Room 2A100), but every FRIDAY from 9 to 10 a.m. as well. The group will be located in the Psychiatry Building (Bldg. 106) and we'll meet in the lobby.

This group focuses on both the physical and psychological addition to tobacco use. Whether you're thinking

about quitting or ready to quit tobacco use, we work with you to find a plan that best meets your needs and goals. ALL Veterans and employees are welcome to attend this drop-in TTG.

No appointment or consult is necessary. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dr. Shyla Rider at ext. 4306 or by email at [shyla.rider@va.gov](mailto:shyla.rider@va.gov).

### Come taste and learn

Come try Anytime Pizza on Dec. 1 starting at 10 a.m. in the Canteen lobby of the Dorn VAMC. While you're there, learn how to prepare healthy recipes or ask nutrition questions. (Must have a VA ID card to receive your sample.)

On Jan. 10 from 10 to 11 a.m., come out to try some tasty Spinach and Artichoke Dip.

### Signed up for the MVP, yet?

The VA's Million Veteran Program is looking for nearly a half million more Veterans to participate in the largest genomic database in the world.

This is a national research program with a goal of better understanding how genes affect health and illness.

If you are a Veteran who is registered within the VA medical system, please stop by the MVP office Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Bldg. 100, 3rd floor, RM 3A140.

It's simple and only takes about 10 minutes to enroll. Help us move health care forward for yourself and future generations of Veterans.

### November Observances

- Native American Heritage Month
- National Diabetes Awareness Month
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Awareness Month
- Lung Cancer Awareness Month
- Marine Corps birthday (10)
- Veterans Day (11)
- Great American Smokeout (17)
- Thanksgiving (24)



Ken Holt, Dorn Medical Media photographer

Janice Negus, otherwise known as the 'Coffee Lady' of Building 106, is well on her way to achieving more than 2,500 volunteer hours of service. She says won't stop there. Her goal is to reach 4,000, which she hopes to have in her grasp in about two more years. An Army Veteran of 22 years, who was assigned in the administration and criminal investigation field, she enjoys giving back to Veterans. Negus admits that volunteering is just fun for her, and with the high spirit she displayed during the Primary Care Fair at Dorn VAMC, Oct. 28, one can see just where this 75-year-old is coming from. Interim Facility Director David Omura personally thanked Negus for her service to her country and to our Veterans.

# November is COPD Awareness Month

## Information from the Veterans Health Library

### What is COPD?

COPD stands for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The airways in your lungs are blocked (obstructed). Because of this, breathing takes more effort. You may have started limiting your activities to avoid shortness of breath. Without treatment, you may not be able to do as much for yourself and need to rely more on others. This can make life less enjoyable.

### When Airways Are Blocked (Chronic Bronchitis or Chronic Asthma)

When cells in the airways make more mucus than normal, blockages sometimes result. The mucus builds up, narrowing the airways. This means less air travels into and out of the lungs.

The lining of the airways may also become inflamed (swollen), and the muscle surrounding the airways may constrict (tighten). These problems cause the airways to narrow even more.

### When Airways Collapse (Emphysema)

When airways are damaged, they lose their stretchiness and become baggy and floppy. Damaged airways may collapse when you exhale, causing air to get trapped in the sacs. This trapped air makes breathing harder.

Over time, the air sacs lose their clustered shape. This may mean that less oxygen enters the blood vessels.

### When Cilia Are Damaged

Smoking harms the cilia that line the airways. Damaged

cilia can't sweep mucus and particles away. Some of the cilia are destroyed. This damage makes the problem described on this sheet even worse.

### How Did I Get COPD?

Most people get COPD from smoking. Cigarette smoke causes lung damage, which can develop into COPD over many years. You may be diagnosed with COPD if one or more of these problems is preventing air from flowing normally through your lungs:

- Chronic bronchitis occurs when damaged lungs produce more mucus than they should.
- Emphysema occurs when damaged lung passages collapse as you breathe out.
- Chronic asthma occurs when substances in the air cause the lung passages to become inflamed. Asthma can sometimes be reversed with medication. But with chronic asthma, the passages stay inflamed all the time.

### How COPD Affects Breathing

COPD makes you work harder to breathe. Air may get trapped in the lungs, which prevents your lungs from filling completely the next time you inhale (breathe in). So, it's harder to take a deep breath. Over time, your lungs may become enlarged. This makes it more difficult for the lungs to expand fully in the chest. These problems can lead to shortness of breath (also called dyspnea). You may also experience wheezing (hoarse, whistling breathing) and fatigue (feeling tired and worn out).

### Diagnosing COPD

Shortness of breath may have prompted you to see the doctor. In many cases, though, COPD progresses for years without obvious symptoms.

To diagnose COPD, a medical evaluation and tests must be done. Once your doctor suspects COPD, breathing tests are done to learn the extent of the problem.

### Your Evaluation

Your evaluation starts with the following. These help your doctor make a diagnosis.

- A health history will be taken. You'll be asked about your lifestyle and smoking habits. You'll also be asked about your symptoms, medical history, and any family history of lung disease.
- An exam will be done. This involves a complete physical evaluation. Your doctor will listen to your heart and lungs. Your nose and throat will be examined. The size of your chest will also be evaluated. This helps show if the lungs are enlarged.
- Tests may be ordered to find out more about your lungs.

### Tests You May Have

- Pulmonary function tests measure the flow of air into and out of your lungs, and the volume of air your lungs can hold. The most common pulmonary function test is spirometry. This measures how fast you can exhale (flow), and how much air you can blow out (volume). First, you breathe in as deeply as you can. Then, you exhale hard into a special instrument called a spirometer. This is connected to a computer that measures the air you breathed out.
- Pulse oximetry shows how much oxygen is in your blood (oxygen saturation). This may be done at rest, as well as during and after exercise.
- Arterial blood gas tests measure levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide in your blood.
- Chest x-rays show the size and shape of your lungs. They can also show certain problems in the lungs.
- CT (computed tomography) scans produce images of the lungs that are more detailed than x-rays.

# Fall festival for Dorn's "SUPERHEROES"



## Flu

from Page 1

tiveness studies that have looked at how well vaccine protects against flu-related doctor's visits have generally found that effectiveness declines with age.

This study indicates that protection against hospitalization was level among older people.

Annual influenza vaccination has been recommended for adults 65 and older in the U.S. since the 1960s and for adults 50 years and older since 2000.

Since 2005, CDC has conducted annual influenza vaccine effectiveness studies to assess how well the vaccine works in preventing medically attended illness.

Until recently, there have been few studies that look at how well the vaccine works in preventing more serious outcomes, like hospitalization. The CID study adds to a growing body of evidence that supports the importance of vaccination in order to prevent these more serious outcomes.

Study findings also support current U.S. recommendations for annual influenza vaccination among adults, especially among adults 65 years of age and older who are at high risk of influenza-associated complications.

During 2015-2016, an estimated 66 percent of people 65 and older got a flu vaccine. While this is the highest vaccination rate among the public for any age group, that still leaves nearly one-third of people 65 and older unvaccinated.



## VA, Walgreens team up to fight influenza



**By Glenn Johnson  
Chief of Communications,  
VHA Office of Community Care**

As Fall approaches, VA health care providers are preparing their annual fight against flu. "Flu Teams" are busy putting up posters, sending out notices and printing handouts that promote the same message – flu infection is serious and VA staff and Veteran patients should get a flu shot.

Because receiving an annual vaccination is widely recognized as the best method for preventing disease and death related to influenza.

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) orders almost 2 million doses of flu vaccine annually to be administered to VA patients and employees at VA medical centers and Community Based Outpatient Clinics.

Flu shots are the cornerstone of their prevention efforts and are provided free. In addition to vaccination, their prevention strategy also includes educating the VA community of the importance of hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, and of course, staying home when sick.

VHA teamed up with national retail pharmacy Walgreens to provide free flu vaccinations for enrolled Veterans through the VA Retail Immunization Care Coordination Program.

This partnership offers greater ac-

cess to flu vaccine, and as a result, tens of thousands Veteran patients have received flu shots at a local Walgreens. This flu season, the partnership between VA and Walgreens continues through March 31, 2017.

All Veterans who are currently enrolled in VA care may walk into any of the over 8,000 Walgreens nationally (and the Duane Reade pharmacies in the New York metropolitan area) to receive a vaccination at no cost.

After presenting a Veterans Identification Card and a photo ID, a Walgreens pharmacist administers the vaccine and transmits that information securely to VA where it becomes part of the patient's electronic medical record.

This program has been especially beneficial to enrolled Veterans who live in rural areas. Because many may live at greater distances from VA medical facilities, the Walgreens/VHA partnership provides increased access to no cost flu vaccinations.

Last year 29 percent of the VA patients who received a flu shot at Walgreens were classified as rural or highly rural by the VA zip code map.

VA is committed to keeping Veteran patients healthy, and during flu season, vaccination is the best way to prevent the spread of flu. No matter where you live, visit your local VA clinic or Walgreens to get a free flu shot.

# Stand Down aims to help end Veteran homelessness



photo by Bob Hall, Dorn VA public affairs



photo by Ken Holt, Dorn VA Medical Media photographer

On Nov. 4, scores of homeless Veterans or Veterans at risk of being homeless converged in downtown Columbia at Transitions to receive medical care, clothing, food, and more during the 2016 Stand Down for the Homeless. The Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center teamed up with a number of its community partners to support the Veterans, as well as other homeless in the community. Stand Downs typically provide the following services to homeless individuals: food, shelter, clothing, health screenings, VA and Social Security benefits counseling, and referrals to a variety of other necessary services, such as housing, employment and substance abuse treatment.

Community organization who participated in this event include: Disabled American Veterans, Cooperative Ministry, South Carolina Works, USC Supportive Housing Service, Experience Work Inc., Wateree Community Actions Inc., American Red Cross, Angel House, Christ Central, Providence House, and Columbia Housing Authority.



photo by Ken Holt, Dorn VA Medical Media photographer

## VA announces \$3.4-million in funding to help the homeless

WASHINGTON – On Sept. 29, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald announced the award of \$3.4-million in grant funding offered through the Grant and Per Diem Program to 16 community agencies that provide enhanced services for homeless Veterans with special needs.

The GPD Program promotes the development and provision of supportive housing and services to help homeless Veterans to have stable residences, increase their skills and income, and achieve independence.

Specifically, GPD special need grant funding assists with additional operating costs of transitional housing and services for special need groups such as women, chronically mental ill, frail elderly, terminally ill, and those with minor dependents.

“GPD Special Need Grants exemplify VA’s response to the wide range of needs of subpopulations of homeless Veterans,” McDonald said. “These 16 grants strengthen the continuum of VA services to help the most vulnerable Veterans become stably housed and achieve greater self-determination.”

As a result of these and other efforts, the number of U.S. Veterans experiencing homelessness has been cut nearly in half since 2010.

As of September 16, 2016, 29 communities and two states have confirmed and publicly announced that they have effectively ended Veteran homelessness, serving as models for others across the nation.

# SmokefreeVET text message program helps Veterans quit

By Leah Stockett

SmokefreeVET is an innovative, text message smoking cessation program that provides daily tips and encouragement to support Veterans who are trying to stop smoking.

Cell phones are generally always with you and always on, which makes them a convenient way to deliver messages and health-related information, particularly on stopping smoking. VA's Veterans Health Administration created SmokefreeVET in collaboration with the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and modeled the program after NCI's SmokefreeTXT.

Launched in May 2013, it has been used by more than 3,500 Veterans who receive texts and allows them to text the program with prompts. To use SmokefreeVET, Veterans need only have a cell phone that can receive text messages.

"SmokefreeVET takes advantage of cell phone technology that everyone has in their pocket. Research has shown that text message programs for smoking cessation are effective," said Dr. Jean Beckham, a psychologist and VA senior research career scientist, co-developer of SmokefreeVET and leader of the evaluation team. "We are looking at how Veterans use SmokefreeVET to improve and tailor the program because the ultimate goal is to give Veterans the tools and support they need to successfully quit smoking."

Typically, SmokefreeVET lasts eight weeks for each user. When a Veteran signs up for SmokefreeVET, they are prompted to provide their quit date and ideally, start the program two weeks prior to that date. Under this scenario, the user receives automated SmokefreeVET texts two weeks prior to their quit date and for six weeks after. Each day, a user receives 2-5 messages that encourage and support their quit attempt.

For example, one pre-quit message reads "Figure out 3 cigs a day you can easily give up and do so! If you cut down it will be easier when you quit.



You're stronger than this addiction." Soon after a user's quit date, they receive messages like "Counseling & medication can increase your chances of quitting. Talk to your VA provider about options. Let them know if you started any quit meds."

SmokefreeVET users not only receive texts, they can send prompts to the program when they want to receive extra support. Users can text the word URGE, STRESS, or SMOKED at any time to SmokefreeVET and receive a supportive tip in response. A user texting SMOKED may receive the message "Hey, quitting smoking is a tough process & there are going to be bumps along the way. But don't give up—look how far you have already come." Importantly, the SmokefreeVET program also contains information about how to contact the Veterans Crisis Line if a user is in emotional distress.

"I let all of the Veterans in our tobacco cessation group know about the SmokefreeVET program," said Dr. Murray McNiel, a psychologist and the smoking cessation lead clinician at the Durham VAMC. "It's a great complement to group treatment, with the texts providing frequent reminders of their

decision to quit as well as coping skills to use in the moment. I've had Veterans tell me it was the most helpful thing in their successful quitting."

To evaluate the program and determine areas for improvement, VA administrators worked with VA researchers to examine the program's effectiveness in supporting abstinence from tobacco. This analysis was published in the November 2016 edition of Addictive Behaviors, in an article entitled "Engagement and Abstinence Among Users of a Smoking Cessation Text Message Program for Veterans."

Looking at data from close to 1,500 Veterans who used SmokefreeVET between 2013 and 2014, the researchers concluded that this text message program may be effective in helping highly engaged Veterans quit smoking. In addition, smoking cessation medication use was associated with cigarette abstinence among SmokefreeVET users.

The SmokefreeVET text message program is available in English and Spanish. Veterans can sign up online at [smokefree.gov/VET](http://smokefree.gov/VET) or by texting the word VET to 47848 (text VETesp to 47848 for Spanish)

## Frequently Called Numbers

Admissions .....	(803) 776-4000 x4983/7190
Appointment Line.....	(803) 647-5829
.....	(800) 293-8262
<b>Billing and Insurance</b>	
Collections – pay a bill .....	(888) 827-4817
General questions.....	(866) 258-2772
Medical claims .....	(803) 776-4000 x6763
<b>Chaplain Services</b>	
8 a.m. to 4 p.m. ....	(803) 776-4000 x6332
After hours .....	(803) 776-4000
Compensation and Pension.....	(803) 776-4000 x6183
Enrollment Eligibility .....	(803) 776-4000 x7010
Information Desk (Dorn VAMC).....	(803) 776-4000 x4179/8055
Medical Records .....	(803) 776-4000 x6283
Mental Health .....	(803) 776-4000 x
MyHealththeVet .....	(803) 695-6783
Patient Advocate .....	(803) 776-4000 x7998/6937
Prosthetics.....	(803) 776-4000 x6323
Release of Information .....	(803) 776-4000 x6290
Shuttle Service.....	(803) 776-4000 x6780
<b>Telephone Advice Line</b>	
Outside Columbia .....	(888) 651-2683
In Columbia .....	(803) 647-5829
Travel Office.....	(803) 776-4000 x4483/4525/4484
Veteran’s Transportation Service .....	(803) 776-4000 6398
<b>Veteran Service Organizations</b>	
American Legion .....	(803) 776-4000 x7539
AmVets.....	(803) 776-4000 x2421
Disabled American Veterans .....	(803) 776-4000 x2422
Military Order of the Purple Heart.....	(803) 776-4000 x2430
Paralyzed Veterans Association .....	(803) 776-4000 x2432
Veteran’s of Foreign Wars.....	(803) 776-4000 x2443
Voluntary Services.....	(803) 776-4000 x6780/7081

## Community-Base Outpatient Clinics

Anderson CBOC  
3030 N. Hwy 81  
Anderson, SC 29621  
Tele (864) 224-5450

Sumter CBOC  
407 N. Salem Ave  
Sumter, SC 29150  
Tele (803) 938-9901

Greenville OPC  
41 Park Creek Drive  
Greenville, SC 29605  
Tele (864) 299-1600

Orangeburg CBOC  
1767 Village Park Drive  
Orangeburg, SC 29118  
(803) 533-1335

Spartanburg CBOC  
279 North Grove Medical Plaza  
Spartanburg, SC 29303  
Tele (864) 582-7025

Rock Hill CBOC  
2670 Mills Park Drive  
Rock Hill, SC 29732  
Tele (803) 366-4848

Florence CBOC  
1822 Sally Hill Farms Blvd  
Florence, SC 29501  
Tele (843) 292-8383



The *Palmetto Post* is a monthly newsletter for the Veterans at and around the Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center, or one of its seven community-based outpatient clinics in Anderson, Florence, Greenville, Orangeburg, Rock Hill, Spartanburg or Sumter.

This newsletter is a product of the Dorn VAMC Public Affairs Office. Any questions, concerns, comments or suggestions should be directed to Bob Hall at (803) 776-4000 x 6519 or by email to [vhamcsdornpa@va.gov](mailto:vhamcsdornpa@va.gov).

### Dorn VAMC Staff

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**Public Affairs Specialist/Editor**..... Bob Hall

## Comments / Suggestions for the *Palmetto Post*

The *Palmetto Post* is designed to help keep South Carolina’s Veterans informed about the health care and services provided by the Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center and its seven community-based outpatient clinics.

This is your newsletter. So suggestions on the information you’d like to see in this newsletter are most welcome. Keep in mind, space is limited as this is only a monthly newsletter at this time, so not all suggestions will be granted.

Submit you comments or suggestions to [vhamcsdornpa@va.gov](mailto:vhamcsdornpa@va.gov).

## Stay connected to with Dorn VAMC

**Dorn VAMC official Web site:**  
[www.columbiasc.va.gov/](http://www.columbiasc.va.gov/)

**Dorn Facebook page:**  
[www.facebook.com/VAColumbiaSC](http://www.facebook.com/VAColumbiaSC)

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