A Call to Duty
Transforming Veteran’s End-of-Life Care

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Lakewood Health System
Staples, MN
Located in Central Minnesota serving 38,000 Morrison, Todd, Wadena, and Cass Counties
Critical Access Hospital (25 beds)
Behavioral Health Unit (10 bed)
Rural Health Clinic
- Five Clinics
  Pillager - Eagle Bend - Motley - Browerville - Staples
Senior Services
- Long Term Care (100 beds)
- 2 Assisted Living Facilities (65 apartments or boarding rooms)
Hospice-Home Care
Palliative Care at LHS

• Long term care
• Homecare
• Out-patient services
• In-patient services

• All have contact person for pt and family to access care and information, to customize care
• All have an Interdisciplinary Team available for various needs
• Team members: RN, Social worker, Chaplain, MD, Pharmacist, Mental Health Practitioner, and as needed therapist, dietitian, spiritual volunteers
• Meet as a team every 2 weeks and informally throughout the week as needs arise
Venues of Palliative Care

Outpatient setting
- Home visits
- Clinic visits
- Phone calls
- Infusion Therapy

Long term Care setting
- Care Center
- Hospital if admitted

Assisted Living setting
- Home visits
- Phone calls

Inpatient setting
- MD consults acutely
- Team consults for goals of care
- Team consults for transition of care

Home Palliative Care
- Eligible for home care services
- Often homebound (Medicare)
- Interdisciplinary team – core team plus therapies, Medical Home, physicians, etc.
New recognition of the unique needs of Veterans

~ 25% of all deaths in US are Veterans
< 4% of Veteran deaths are in VA facilities
~ 33% of Veterans are enrolled in VA
Barriers for Veterans

- Transportation (van—may be unrealistic for actual Pt needs)
- Distance
- Compromised Health
- Anxieties about driving in unfamiliar territories
- Unaware of services
- Limited contracted facilities (Nursing homes)
- Communication
- Resistance to receive help from VA
- Red Tape
Neighboring VA clinics

- Brainerd 30 miles
- Alexandria 43 miles
- Fergus Falls 60 miles
- St. Cloud 62 miles
- Bemidji 78 miles
Objectives

• Educate Lakewood employee staff about the special needs of Veterans

• Address reimbursement of VA paid community services

• Lakewood will coordinate with VA and VA partners to assist in seeking reimbursement for Palliative Care.

• Raise community awareness about Veterans living in the five county region area, the end-of-life needs they may have and the benefits to which they are entitled.
Strategies/Interventions

• Met with County Veteran Service Officers in the surrounding area to collaborate about roles and network regarding opportunities to support veterans
• Information booth at area health fair and Aging Conference
• Trained social workers, medical home, palliative care and hospice staff regarding veterans services at end-of-life
• Informed area ministers of We Honor Veterans program at Hospice Foundation of America videoconference on Ethics Issues at the End-of-Life
• Participated in information-sharing sessions through webinars and conference calls
VA’s Home Based Primary Care looks very similar to LHS’s Palliative Care Program
A unique home care program that provides comprehensive longitudinal primary care by an interdisciplinary team of VA staff in the homes of Veterans with complex chronic and disabling disease for whom routine clinic-based care is not effective

- Veteran’s home is located within the catchment area of the program (40 mile radius)
- The Veteran is or is likely to become non-ambulatory, homebound or is terminally ill
Goal

Explore ways to implement Home Based Primary Care beyond the 40 mile radius service area
The people we serve

- Veteran with multiple primary cancers. He was seen during an in-patient stay at LHS. Transferred to Home Care Based Palliative Care and cared for by hospice nurses until his enrollment in hospice a few weeks later. He died in his home as he and his family desired.

- Veteran in Out-patient PC program who is stable with severe COPD. Have reviewed goals of care and are establishing a trusting relationship with someone who distrusts the government and healthcare.

- Veteran was in Out-patient PC with goal to transition to Hospice, died in hospital. Was not VA connected.

- Veteran with Home Care and Palliative Care. (Telemedicine)

- Veteran in hospital- informed of VA benefits did not believe. Needed a transfer out for surgery. Family asked for Palliative Care—received it and also VA benefits.
Serving Our Vets

• We Honor Vets

• Collecting military history upon admission to our programs

• Planning Vet-to-Vet Volunteer Program

• Planning Honor Ceremonies for Vets/families

• Beyond the Yellow Ribbon

• Ongoing staff education
“You matter because of who you are. You matter to the last moment of your life, and we will do all we can, not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die”.

--Dame Cicely Saunders
Resource

www.wehonorveterans.org
Thank you!

Questions??
Contact Information

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