



VISN 8
VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

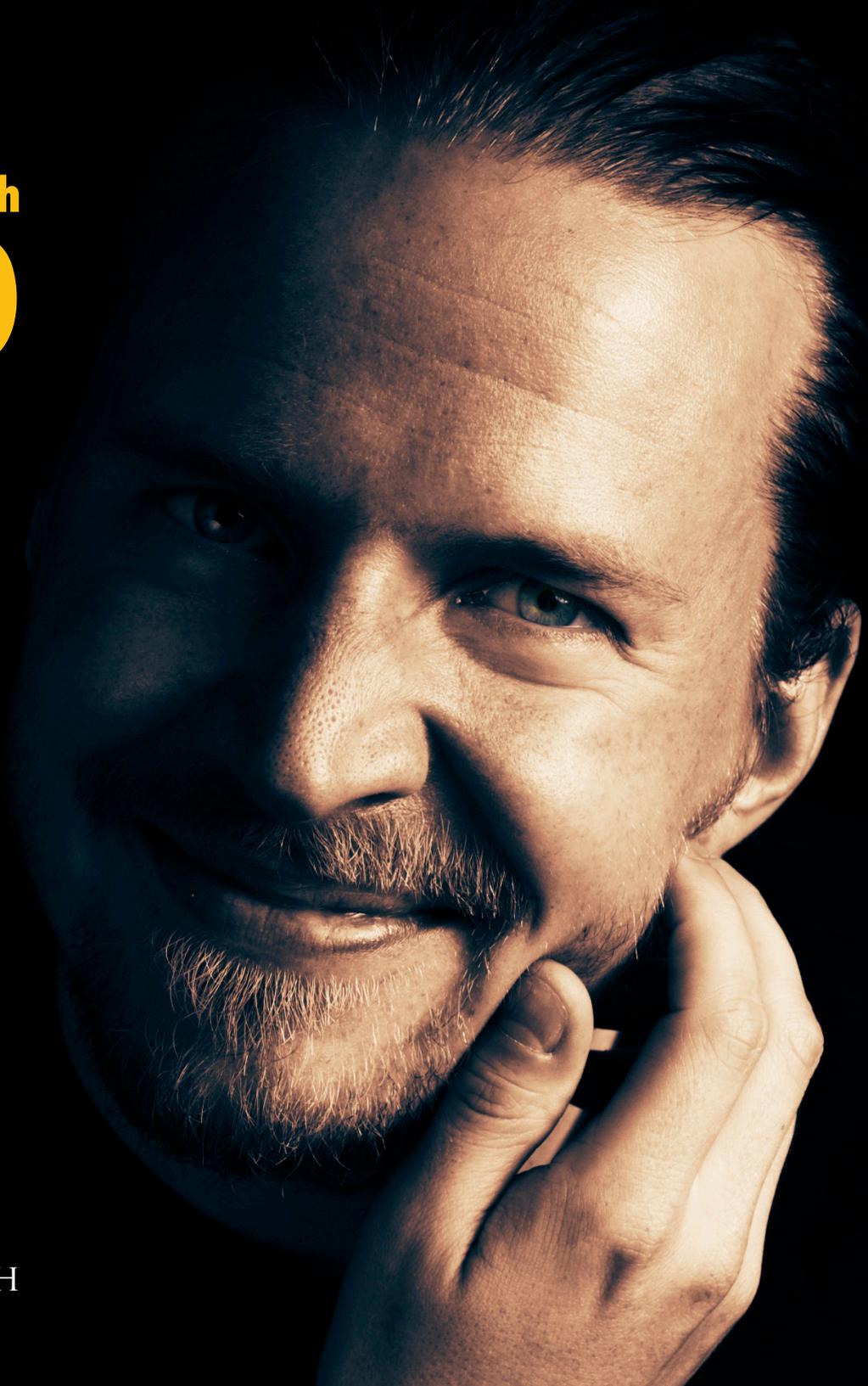
Veterans HEALTH MATTERS

WELLNESS MAGAZINE FOR VETERANS IN FLORIDA, SOUTH GEORGIA & THE CARIBBEAN

SPRING 2014 | WWW.VISN8.VA.GOV

TAKE ONE HOME

HELP for Veterans with **PTSD**



Inside:
TELEMENTAL HEALTH
COUNSELING

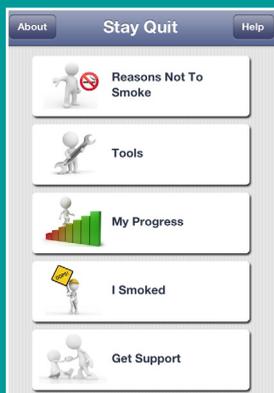
Want to Quit Tobacco?

There's an App (and more) for That!

We are happy to announce several new initiatives to help Veterans quit tobacco. First is **Quit VET**, a national, proactive, toll-free tobacco cessation quit line. It's available at (855) 784-8838 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern time. Trained tobacco cessation counselors provide up to four individualized telephone counseling sessions. Services are available in both English & Spanish.

Second, is the FREE mobile phone application **Stay Quit Coach**, an App designed to help Veterans with PTSD quit smoking. The App helps to set goals and provides resources (helps for stress management and keeping track of how much money users are saving by quitting). Users have access to support contacts or hotlines for preventing relapse. You can download the app at the iTunes App Store.

Third is **SmokefreeVet**, a free text messaging service for military Veterans (standard text messaging rates apply). Sign up at www.smokefree.gov/vet. Text the words "urge," "smoked," and "stress" to the service and you'll receive encouragement, advice, and tips to help you stay tobacco free. You can receive one to five messages a day depending on your preference.



To Our Readers

Welcome Spring! In this issue of Health Matters, we also welcome new Apps and services that make it easier for you to take care of your health needs and reach your health goals.



On the left of this page, learn about an App from SmokefreeVET. This is a mobile text message service with 24/7 encouragement, advice, and tips to help Veterans quit smoking for good.

Find out about VA's Dental Insurance Program — An opportunity to purchase dental insurance at a reduced cost through Delta Dental or MetLife on page 3.

On pages 4 and 5, read how telemental health counseling helped U.S. Air Force Veteran Lisa Rodriguez deal with PTSD. Getting counseling in your home or a nearby clinic through a high speed Internet connection and webcam reduces the stress and travel time needed to receive counseling at a VA facility that is far away.

Another tool to help Veterans deal with PTSD is a free mobile App called PE Coach. This reinforces prolonged exposure (PE) treatment that Veterans receive in PE therapy with a professional counselor. Learn about its use and benefits on page 6.

Finally, think spring by doing the Spring Word Search on page 7. Also on this page, enjoy the quick and easy-to-prepare Taco Salad recipe from U.S. Navy Veteran Robert Stoye.

Have a safe and healthy spring.

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DENTAL Insurance Program

Now Available to Enrolled Veterans

VA's Dental Insurance Program (VADIP) offers enrolled Veterans and beneficiaries of VA's Civilian Health and Medical Program (CHAMPVA) the opportunity to purchase dental insurance at a reduced cost. VA is offering this service through Delta Dental and MetLife.

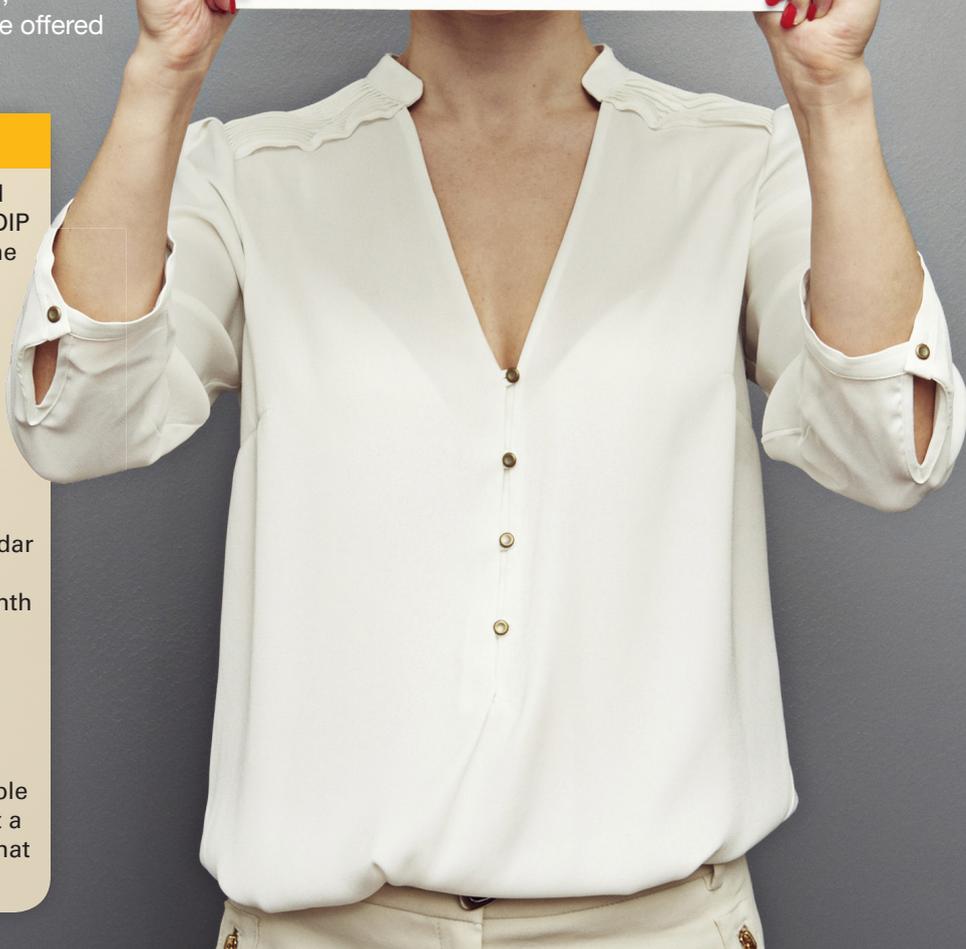
VADIP is a three-year, national pilot program to assess the feasibility and advisability of providing a premium-based dental insurance plan to eligible individuals. The program is mandated by Public Law 111-163, Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010.

Eligibility for VADIP

Veterans enrolled in the VA health care program and CHAMPVA program beneficiaries are eligible to participate in VADIP. Participation in VADIP will not affect Veterans' eligibility for VA dental services and treatment.

Dependents of Veterans, except those eligible under CHAMPVA, are not eligible for VADIP; however, separate coverage options may be offered dependents by the insurance carrier.

For more information on VADIP, visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits/VADIP and click the insurer's link for specific information regarding registration, rates and services.



Dental Plan Information

The program began November 15, 2013 and individuals interested in participating in VADIP may complete an application online, over the phone or by mail.

A direct link to each provider's VADIP webpage is available from www.va.gov/healthbenefits/VADIP. This table shows contact information for each provider.

Coverage under VADIP began January 1, 2014, and will be provided throughout the United States and its territories. The initial participation period will be at least 12 calendar months. Afterward, VADIP beneficiaries can renew their participation for another 12-month period or be covered month-to-month, as long as the participant remains eligible for coverage and VA continues VADIP.

Each participant will pay a fixed monthly premium for coverage, in addition to any copayments required by his/her plan. Multiple plan options will allow participants to select a plan that provides benefits and premiums that meet their dental needs and budget.

Telemental Health Counseling

Offers Veterans with PTSD a Lifeline

“The day I arrived in Bagdad, I lay down to take a nap and woke up to a bombing. From then on, it was a regular occurrence.”

Lisa Rodriguez, U.S. Air Force Veteran



U.S. Air Force Veteran Lisa Rodriguez suffers from PTSD. Telemental health counseling provided virtually is helping her transition back to a normal life.

By Susan Wentzell

“When your doctor can come into your living room, it makes all the difference in the world,” said 35-year-old Lisa Rodriguez who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. “It’s so much less stress. And when you have PTSD, the last thing you needed is added stress.”

Rodriguez is one of a growing number of Veterans who receive psychiatric services virtually either at a nearby VA clinic or right in their homes, connecting via a high speed Internet connection and webcam with a counselor located miles away at a VA Medical Center or directly from their homes while teleworking. For Rodriguez, who received telemental health counseling in her Valdosta, Ga. home for about eight months, the situation was ideal.

“I didn’t have to travel 45 minutes away to the Lake City VA Hospital to see my counselor and I didn’t have to arrange for someone to watch my daughter.

“Most importantly, at home, I’m in my comfort zone, I am more myself talking to my doctor here versus in a sterile office. I tell her about my dogs and she can see them; she even met my daughter. She sees me in my environment and it helps me know she understands,” she said.

Trust is paramount when discussing the painful memories of her time overseas. It was March 2008 and the International “Green Zone” in central Bagdad was under almost daily rocket and mortar attack by insurgents. For the former U.S. Air Force Technical Sergeant, safety seemed illusive.

“Making psychotherapy and counseling available via telehealth directly into the Veteran’s home is a tremendous help, especially for those who live a distance from the nearest clinic, who can’t drive or who have no access to transportation.”

*Dr. Bryan Ballot, M.D.,
VISN 8 Mental Health
Product Line Manager*



“The day I arrived in Bagdad, I lay down to take a nap and woke up to a bombing. From then on, it was a regular occurrence. You couldn’t get a good night’s sleep because you didn’t know if you would sleep through the alarm or maybe it wouldn’t sound and you would miss an incoming (attack),” Rodriguez said. “We lost people, including someone I was very close to.”

Stationed back in the U.S. after her 6-month tour of duty in Iraq, the unseen scars of the battlefield continued to haunt her for the next several years until she left the Air Force in 2010 and returned to Washington. First treated for PTSD at the Walla Walla VA Medical Center in July 2011, she said her life then changed for the better.

“It wasn’t until I started going to the VA that it was determined I had PTSD. I was actually listened to and it was a turning point for me,” she said. Following a former love, a subsequent move brought her to Valdosta and treatment managed at the Lake City VA Medical Center.

“Because of the therapy I received from the VA, I am a completely different person today. In fact, I’m studying for my master’s degree in counseling and hoping to work for the VA. Maybe I’ll be able to help someone just like me some day,” she said.

Dr. Karen Courchaine is a telemental health psychologist and member of the PTSD Clinical Team at the Lake City VAMC, part of the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System. She said telemental health counseling is ideal for Veterans who live in isolated geographic areas far from a VA clinic, those who have transportation concerns, and those with physical or psychiatric limitations that make it difficult to attend psychotherapy on a regular basis.



*Dr. Karen Courchaine,
Telemental Health
Psychologist at the Lake
City VA Medical Center*

Telemental Health Counseling: A New Source of Support



Telemental health in VA is a relatively new source of support for Veterans, helping them manage their care, no matter where they happen to be. And that’s important, particularly for Veterans who live in remote areas where mental health care is generally available on a limited basis.

In 2013, the hospitals and clinics of the VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN 8) in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean—provided telemental health services to 4,372 patients with more than 10,000 individual encounters.

With a largely rural Veteran population, the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System (NF-SGVHS) is one of the busiest in the country to offer these services, particularly for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

In 2013, there were almost 700 Clinical Video Telehealth encounters by Veterans getting their PTSD psychiatric care virtually from VA counselors located at the Lake City or Gainesville VA Medical Centers in Florida. About 16 percent of these sessions were conducted in Veterans homes; the rest were done at NF/SGVHS outpatient clinics close to where their patients live. For their initial intake interview, all Veterans receiving therapy see their counselors in person at one of these VAMCs.

To further accommodate working Veterans, VA clinical staff sometimes telework, conducting these virtual sessions directly from their homes which allows them to extend appointment times past daytime hours.

Eligible Veterans interested in learning more about telehealth services should talk to their VA provider.



Mobile App Helps With PTSD Therapy

PE (for prolonged exposure) Coach is a free, smartphone mobile application for use with post-traumatic stress disorder treatment (PTSD). The VA and Department of Defense use prolonged exposure therapy as an effective treatment for PTSD. The app can be downloaded onto Apple and Android mobile devices.

Psychologists at the VA National Center for PTSD and the Defense Department's National Center for Telehealth and Technology, known as T2, developed the mobile app to specifically help patients with their therapy.

"PE Coach is a helpful tool that assists our service members and veterans who are between visits and in treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder," said Dr. Jonathon Woodson, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs. "We have shared this app with our military health care providers as well, and hope that many individuals who are receiving PE therapy will find it useful."

Prolonged exposure therapy helps a patient process a trauma memory to reduce the distress and avoidance caused by the trauma. The patient revisits the memory with a therapist and as the memory is emotionally processed, anxiety decreases. The therapy also helps the patient confront avoided situations that trigger memories of the trauma.

Many psychologists providing prolonged exposure therapy acknowledge it could be more effective if patients could better adhere to their assignments between sessions.

The patient installs PE Coach on their smartphone and can record the therapy session for playback between the sessions. The app also provides an explanation of exposure therapy, assignments, explanations of PTSD and its symptoms, and a convenient way to write notes about typically avoided locations, situations and events for later discussions with their therapist.

PE Coach should only be used in combination with professional counseling. Experts believe PE Coach helps users successfully adhere to PE treatment, which could improve the quality of the treatment.

PE Coach is available for both Apple and Android mobile devices. More information about the app is at www.t2health.org/apps/pe-coach.



Y L F R E T T U B
 R A S P I L U T H
 E E M U L T L O D
 M S O P N I A R R
 R I O A P R I L N
 A L L E R B M U G
 W P B U D D I N G

Spring Word Search

ARIL	BIRD	BLOOM
BUDDING	BUTTERFLY	MAY
PLANT	RAIN	SUN
TULIPS	UMBRELLA	WARMER



List remaining letters in order.

Solution: _____

Taco Salad

Ingredients

- 1 lb lean ground beef
- 1 packet reduced-sodium taco seasoning
- 1 head lettuce, shredded
- 2 large tomatoes, diced
- 1 onion, diced
- 1/2 cup low-fat shredded cheese
- Fat-free sour cream (optional)
- Cilantro, finely diced (garnish)
- Baked tortilla chips



Directions

Brown beef in a non-stick 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat for 5 minutes or until meat is no longer pink. Break up meat with your spoon. Drain off fat. Stir in taco seasoning packet and add 1/4 cup water; heat until it boils.

Divide lettuce among 4 dinner plates. Top with beef mixture, diced tomatoes, onion, cheddar cheese, and sour cream (optional). Arrange tortilla chips on plate around salad. Garnish with cilantro. Use chips to scoop up beef mixture or to crumble over top of salad.

Serves 4. Serving size is 1 cup.

Nutritional Information:

Calories 310 | fat, 10g | Carbs, 27g | fiber, 5g | protein, 28g

*Recipe by Robert Stoye,
 U.S. Navy Veteran
 Mr. Stoye, an Okeechobee,
 Fla. resident, served in the
 U.S. Navy. He says he learned
 quite a bit in the VA's MOVE!
 Program including portion
 control, pushing himself away
 from the table when satisfied
 and taking smaller bites.*



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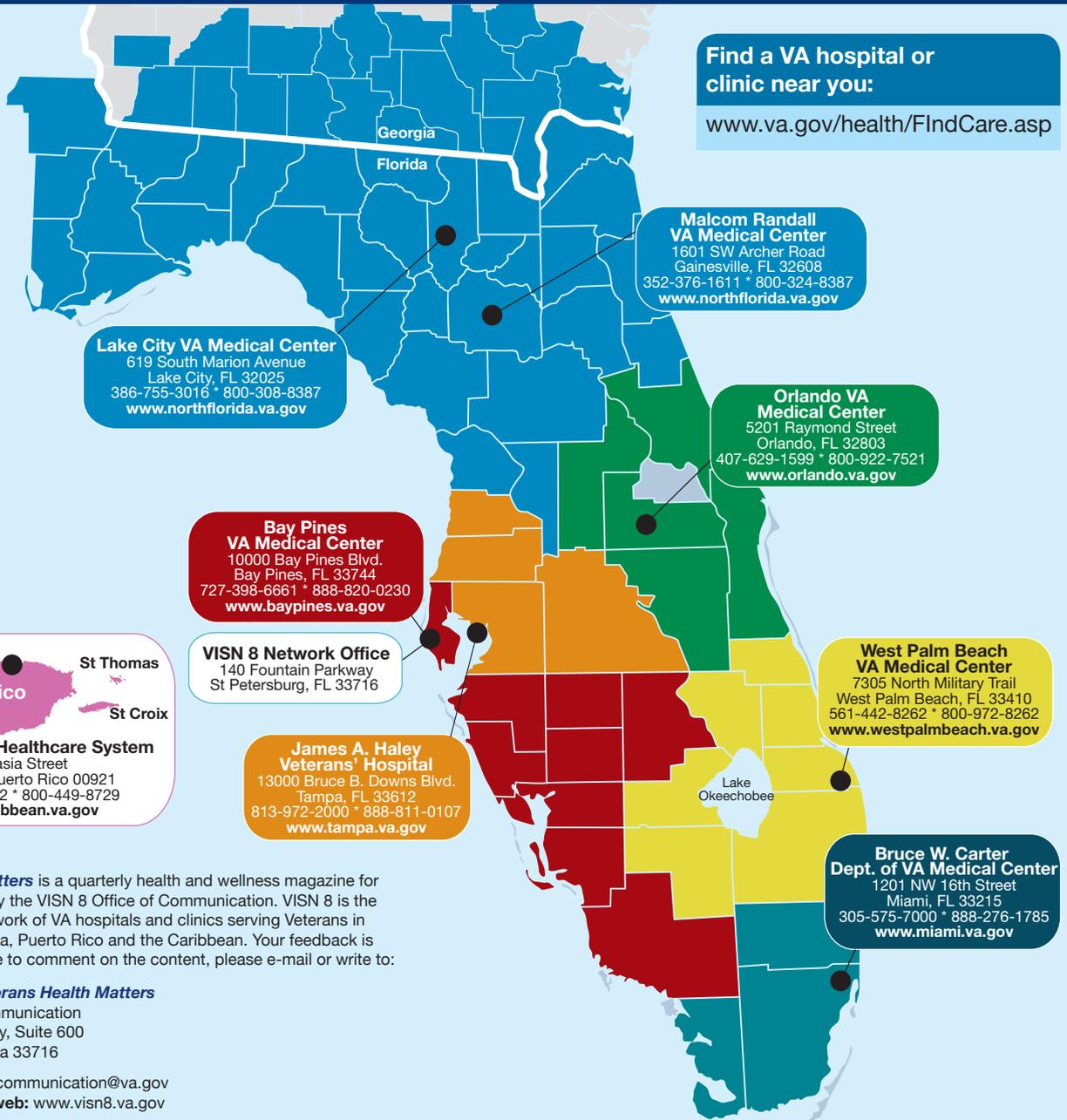
Want to quit smoking?
Call 1-855-QUIT-VET
(1-855-784-8838) to speak
with a smoking cessation
counselor about a Quit
Plan. Any Veteran receiving
healthcare through VA is
eligible to use this service.



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www.visn8.va.gov

 at all
Medical Centers



Veterans Health Matters is a quarterly health and wellness magazine for Veterans produced by the VISN 8 Office of Communication. VISN 8 is the country's largest network of VA hospitals and clinics serving Veterans in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. Your feedback is welcome. If you'd like to comment on the content, please e-mail or write to:

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