IN MEMORY OF
Charlene Molloy, Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner, 1966-2018

This issue of Veterans Health Matters is dedicated to Charlene Molloy, whose amazing life was devoted to caring for Veterans and whose many contributions to this magazine over the years have helped its readers improve their health and well-being.
To Our Readers

Many of us suffer from low back pain at some time in our lives. It may last only a few days, a few weeks, or may become chronic and last much longer. Veterans experiencing low back pain have many options available when it comes to VA therapies and treatments. Read more on page 3.

One pain management therapy that many Veterans are beginning to choose is battlefield acupuncture, especially with chronic pain. Learn more about this complementary approach, and how one Veteran benefited greatly on pages 4-5.

It’s hard to believe the annual flu season is right around the corner. All Veterans are encouraged to get an annual flu vaccine. See how we put a lighter “spin” on flu facts as this season’s flu bugs reveal their “secrets” on page 6. Plus, have fun locating some flu bugs throughout this issue. You will also find a useful chart on page 7 to help identify whether you have the flu, or the common cold, along with their treatments.

Finally, we would like to dedicate this issue of Veterans Health Matters to Charlene Molloy, pictured on the cover. Charlene was an original member of the magazine’s editorial board and will be greatly missed by her peers, Veteran patients, and loved ones.

Be well!

Miguel H. LaPuz, M.D.
Network Director, VISN 8

Living Well – VA Resources

Veterans have many online resources and tutorials to help learn how to live well. Whether you’re looking for health care, or ways to stay connected with fellow Veterans, it’s easy to get started.

- **VHA YouTube** – www.youtube.com/user/VeteransHealthAdmin. Search VA Sunshine Healthcare Network playlist.
- **VA App Store** – mobile.VA.gov. Securely access patient data using your smartphone.

**Did You Know?**

Most VA apps that display your personal health information are built like websites to reach the largest number of platforms, devices, and users possible. Because these apps are completely web-based, no download is required, and none of your VA medical information is stored on your device unless you request it.

You can easily save a VA app icon to the home screen of your device and access it like any other app. Learn how by visiting https://mobile.va.gov/saving-va-mobile-app-home-screen.
Healing Low Back Pain

By Cynthia Futral-Eason, D.O.
Assistant Chief, Whole Health Service
James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital

How does low back pain feel?
Low back pain can range from dull and constant aching to sudden or sharp pain that makes it hard to move. It can start without warning or ramp up gradually over time.

When is low back pain serious enough to call my health care provider?
If you have any of the following symptoms you should see your health care team:

- Severe pain that does not improve with rest
- Numbness or tingling in your lower extremities
- Pain after an accident or injury

What is chronic vs. occasional low back pain?
Occasional or acute pain comes on suddenly and usually lasts less than six weeks. Chronic pain typically lasts longer than three months, and even many years.

What about self-care?

What treatments other than over-the-counter medications can help?
Self-management of chronic pain starts by understanding what matters most to you. Treating chronic low back pain requires a thoughtful and wide-ranging approach for each Veteran.

Using hot or cold packs can temporarily help, but they do not “fix” back pain. Physical therapy is often the best first treatment for acute low back pain. Exercising (the correct way!), reducing stress, limiting alcohol, quitting smoking, joining a support group, volunteering, eating healthy, learning distraction techniques, and even getting a massage can all help with managing pain at home.

Complementary and integrative medicine focuses on improving sleep patterns and habits, learning relaxation techniques, and simple breathing exercises. Practicing meditation and mindfulness improves the mind’s flexibility and acceptance of how the body can move with the pain, especially if it’s chronic. Acupuncture has shown some benefits for short-term pain relief. Yoga, qi gong and tai chi are movement practices that help restore the body’s natural motion.

Home skills are very important, too. Knowing how to lift objects like laundry baskets or tie one’s shoes may help relieve pain. Good bedding and comfortable pillows, wearing supportive footwear, and using assistive devices can also help improve chronic pain.

What resources are available at my VA facility to help manage my back pain?
For enrolled Veterans, a great first step is to seek advice from your Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) to learn what resources are available. Your PACT can connect you with physical therapy, chiropractic care, acupuncture, biofeedback, and behavioral health, as well as pain specialists. You may also have options for complementary and integrative Whole Health services there.

Watch the Video!
You can view the video version of “Healing Low Back Pain” at www.visn8.va.gov/visn8/news/publications.asp.
Managing Chronic Pain: Battlefield Acupuncture is ‘Bling With Benefits’

Veteran Luis Rosario left his doctor’s office showing off his new “bling,” 10 tiny gold studs piercing different parts of both ears. However, this bling was more than just decorative. As a medical treatment, it also greatly eased his chronic back and shoulder pain in the few minutes it took to insert the tiny, solid gold needles into his ears.

Rosario was being treated in James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital’s new Battlefield Acupuncture (BFA) Clinic, part of the hospital’s chronic pain management program. The clinic was started by Dr. Nazimuddin Qazi, JAHVH Ambulatory Care Pain Clinic Lead Attending Physician.

Acupuncture is the practice of inserting thin needles into various parts of the body to treat a variety of medical ailments. It has been practiced in traditional Chinese medicine for more than 2,000 years. However, BFA is a relative newcomer. It was developed in 2001 by Air Force physician Dr. Richard Niemtzow, and gets its name by originally focusing on only one course of treatment.

Managing Chronic Pain: Battlefield Acupuncture is ‘Bling With Benefits’

Dr. Nazimuddin Qazi inserts a tiny gold needle into a precise location in Veteran Luis Rosario’s ear as part of the Battlefield Acupuncture (BFA) treatment for his chronic back and shoulder pain at the James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital in Tampa. BFA is one of several alternative treatments offered to Veterans as part of the Whole Health System, a new approach to health care. Besides Tampa, the treatment is also offered at the Orlando VA Medical Center and in the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System.

By Ed Drohan

Veteran Luis Rosario left his doctor’s office showing off his new “bling,” 10 tiny gold studs piercing different parts of both ears. However, this bling was more than just decorative. As a medical treatment, it also greatly eased his chronic back and shoulder pain in the few minutes it took to insert the tiny, solid gold needles into his ears.

Rosario was being treated in James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital’s new Battlefield Acupuncture (BFA) Clinic, part of the hospital’s chronic pain management program. The clinic was started by Dr. Nazimuddin Qazi, JAHVH Ambulatory Care Pain Clinic Lead Attending Physician.

Acupuncture is the practice of inserting thin needles into various parts of the body to treat a variety of medical ailments. It has been practiced in traditional Chinese medicine for more than 2,000 years. However, BFA is a relative newcomer. It was developed in 2001 by Air Force physician Dr. Richard Niemtzow, and gets its name by originally focusing on only one course of treatment.
The needles are usually taped over so they don’t fall out prematurely or get pulled out by things like clothing. Patients are asked to avoid rubbing the needles or other activities that could cause the sites to become infected. Otherwise, they sleep with them and carry on their regular activities. The needles are designed to remain in the ear for three to five days before being removed by the patient. The treatment is repeated as often as every two weeks, depending on the patient’s desire and schedule.

Qazi said the treatment can be used for any type of pain but is extremely effective on musculoskeletal pain. “Low back pain is the most common type of chronic pain, and it is phenomenally effective for that,” Qazi explained. “Hip pain, knee pain, and shoulder pain have all benefited” from BFA and is “…a very useful tool” in the medical provider’s toolbox for treating chronic pain, Qazi said. However, it is just one of the treatments available and is not designed to replace other forms of treatment or therapy.

There are some people who should avoid BFA, including those who take blood-thinning medication or who are extremely needle-phobic, he said. For the latter, there are non-invasive treatments that place small magnets at the acupuncture points rather than using needles.

While Qazi and another physician are treating Veterans in the weekly BFA Clinic at the main hospital in Tampa, other practitioners have been BFA-trained and can now provide treatment at other community clinics in the JAHVH health care system.

“I walk in here and I feel the pain, and when I walk out I’m in good shape.”

For Rosario, who has suffered from lower back and shoulder pain for nearly 18 years, this treatment has provided relief he wasn’t able to find anywhere else. Before BFA treatment, he estimated his pain to be at level six on a 10-point scale. After the treatments, he said it was at zero. He would definitely recommend the treatment to other Veterans suffering from chronic pain. “I walk in here and I feel the pain, and when I walk out I’m in good shape.”
Flu Bugs Reveal All

A flu shot is the best way to prevent the flu.

Flu bugs of 2018-2019:
- A (H1N1)
- A (H3N2)
- B (Victoria)
- B (Yamgata)

Regardless of where you live, we are the most likely virus-types to “visit” you this flu season, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We can’t wait for the flu party to get started!

Should you be worried?
Totally! We can make you feel so tired and miserable that you don’t want to get out of bed. We can infect anyone – young or old, in good health, or living with a chronic condition. We sent up to 700,000 people to the hospital in recent years and between 12,000 and 57,000 people die because of us.

Here comes the flu vaccine!
A flu shot is the best way to send us packing. All persons aged six months and older should get a flu vaccine every year during flu season. It gives your immune system the know-how to identify and destroy us. So sad for us but good for you! Also, getting a flu shot can make it harder for us to spread to other people.

We spread ourselves around.
You don’t need to look far to find us. If we infect you, we hang around by the thousands when you cough, sneeze, and breathe. When you touch something like a doorknob or counter top, we’re right there, too. When you show up for work sick, you pass us on to your coworkers, and their families and friends, and away we go!

We are a handful.
We can infect you when you touch your nose, mouth, and eyes with unclean hands. Next to getting a yearly flu vaccine, frequent handwashing is the best way to keep us away. If you get the flu, you may shorten our stay by resting and drinking lots of fluids. Cover your sneezes and coughs. Use a tissue or cough/sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, then wash your hands well. Disinfect door handles, light switches, remote controls, keyboard and mouse, and hand railings.

Should you take Tamiflu?
Ask your health care team about Tamiflu, an anti-viral drug. It reduces flu symptoms (not that we want you to), helps you recover sooner, and may reduce the risk for flu-related complications, such as pneumonia. Tamiflu works best when started within two days of getting sick.

Getting Your Flu Shot
Veterans enrolled in VA health care and VA staff may get a FREE flu shot at their nearest VA health care facility. Check with your facility about “drive through” or walk-in flu shot clinics.

- Non-VA Providers and Pharmacies: Many local retail pharmacies offer flu shots covered by private insurance or Medicare. If you don’t have insurance, there will usually be a charge.

- VA-Walgreens Partnership: Enrolled Veterans can also get their FREE seasonal flu shot at any Walgreens store that offers them. When you show your ID card to the pharmacist, Walgreens will send your immunization record securely and it will become part of your VA electronic health record. Walgreens accepts most insurance plans, including Medicare.

For more information visit www.publichealth.va.gov/flu.
“Find the Flu Bugs” Activity
Can you find these six creepy “flu bugs” hiding in this issue of Veterans Health Matters?

Flu vs. Common Cold

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIGNS &amp; SYMPTOMS</th>
<th>INFLUENZA (FLU)</th>
<th>COMMON COLD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Onset of symptoms</td>
<td>Abrupt</td>
<td>Gradual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fever above 100° F</td>
<td>Usual</td>
<td>Rare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aches &amp; chills</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Uncommon/mild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tired &amp; weak</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sneezy/stuffy/runny nose</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sore throat</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest discomfort</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cough</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Rare</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TREATMENT

There is no cure for the flu or common cold but symptoms can be treated.

- **For the flu** - Call your provider right away (antiviral medicine may help); if you have a fever of 100° F for 3+ days; if symptoms return after feeling better; or if you have dark urine.

- **For a cold** - Call your provider if your fever lasts 3+ days; or returns after a fever-free period; or if symptoms last longer than 10 days.

Get medical care immediately - if you have shortness of breath; wheezing; coughing up blood; chest pain or pressure when breathing, especially with heart disease; sudden dizziness; or confusion.

**Receive Veterans Health Matters magazine by mail or email**

To receive a printed copy of Veterans Health Matters through the U.S. mail or sent directly to your email account, just let us know and we’ll add you to the mailing list. Ways to reach us are as follows:

**By Mail:**
1. Complete this form with the Veteran’s full name and current mailing address.
2. Cut out the form and insert in a stamped envelope.
3. Mail to:
   American Institute for Preventive Medicine
   c/o VISN 8 – VHM
   30445 Northwestern Hwy., Ste. 350
   Farmington Hills, MI 48334
   (Please print)
   First Name Middle Initial
   Last Name
   Address
   City
   State Zip

**By Email:**
VISN8VHM@healthylife.com
Be sure to include the above information.

**By Phone:**
(800) 345-2476 – press 5 for English or press 6 for Spanish

---

**Flu vs. Common Cold**

**SIGNS & SYMPTOMS**

- **INFLUENZA (FLU)**
  - Abrupt
  - Usual
  - Common
  - Sometimes
  - Common
  - Common
  - Common
  - Common

- **COMMON COLD**
  - Gradual
  - Rare
  - Uncommon/mild
  - Sometimes
  - Common
  - Common
  - Sometimes

**TREATMENT**

- **For the flu** - Call your provider right away (antiviral medicine may help); if you have a fever of 100° F for 3+ days; if symptoms return after feeling better; or if you have dark urine.

- **For a cold** - Call your provider if your fever lasts 3+ days; or returns after a fever-free period; or if symptoms last longer than 10 days.

Get medical care immediately - if you have shortness of breath; wheezing; coughing up blood; chest pain or pressure when breathing, especially with heart disease; sudden dizziness; or confusion.
2019 Calendar Coming Soon!
The Healthy Living Calendar will soon be available at VA hospitals and clinics in the VA Sunshine Healthcare Network. Take one home during your next visit.

VA Sunshine Healthcare Network
www.visn8.va.gov

Find a VA hospital or clinic near you:
www.va.gov/health/FindCare.asp

Bruce W. Carter Dept. of VA Medical Center
1201 NW 16th Street
Miami, FL 33125
305-575-7000 • 888-276-1785
www.miami.va.gov

C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center
10000 Bay Pines Blvd.
Bay Pines, FL 33744
727-398-6661 • 888-820-0230
www.baypines.va.gov

James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital
13000 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.
Tampa, FL 33612
813-972-2000 • 888-811-0107
www.tampa.va.gov

Lake City VA Medical Center
619 South Marion Avenue
Lake City, FL 32025
386-755-3016 • 800-308-8387
www.northflorida.va.gov

Malcom Randall VA Medical Center
1601 SW Archer Road
Gainesville, FL 32608
352-376-1611 • 800-324-8387
www.northflorida.va.gov

Orlando VA Medical Center
13800 Veterans Way
Orlando, FL 32827
407-631-1000 • 800-922-7521
www.orlando.va.gov

West Palm Beach VA Medical Center
7305 North Military Trail
West Palm Beach, FL 33410
561-422-8262 • 800-972-8262
www.westpalmbeach.va.gov

VA Caribbean Healthcare System
10 Casia Street
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00921
787-641-7582 • 800-449-8729
www.caribbean.va.gov