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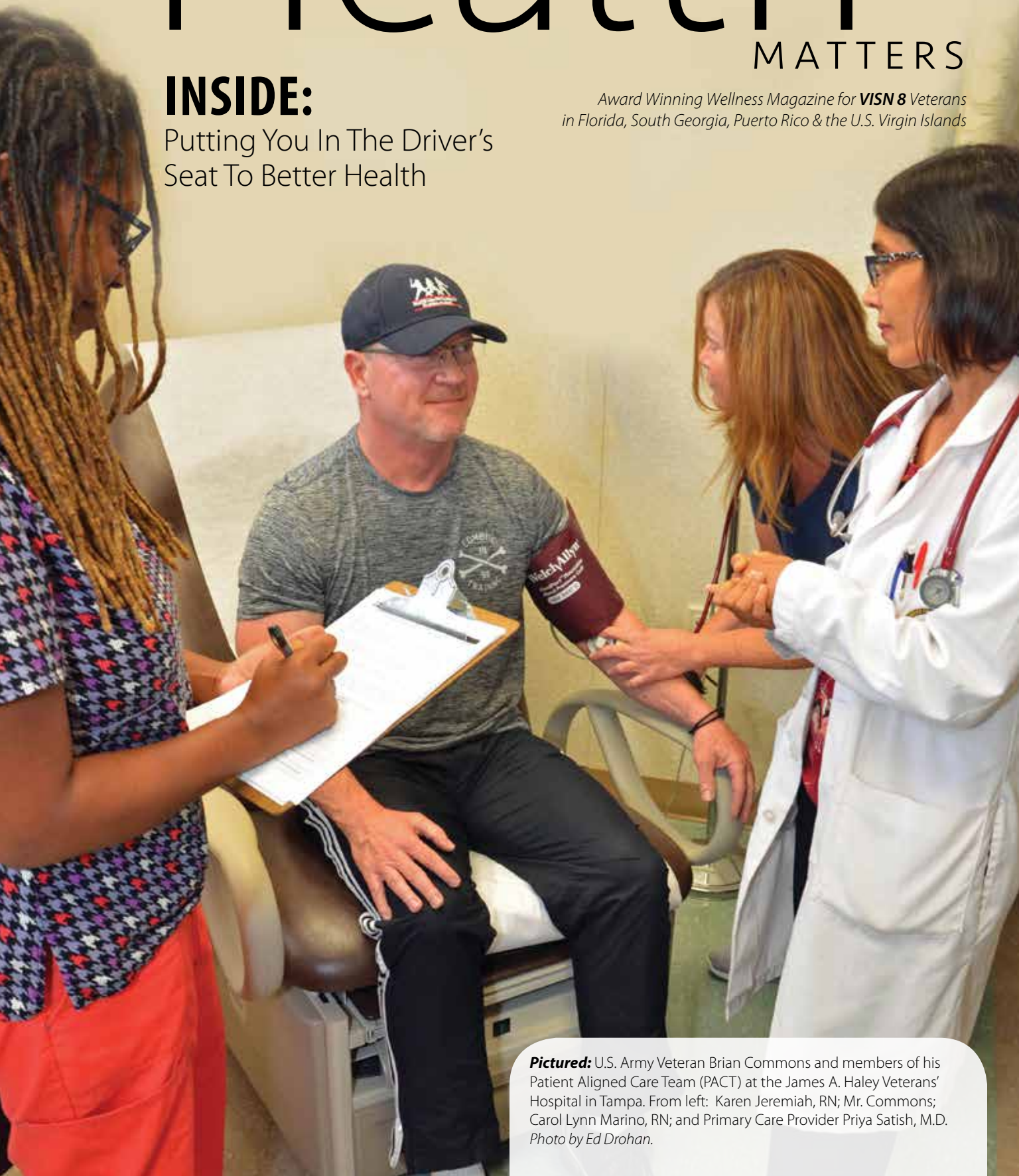
VETERANS Health MATTERS

VA  U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN 8)

INSIDE:

Putting You In The Driver's
Seat To Better Health

*Award Winning Wellness Magazine for **VISN 8** Veterans
in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico & the U.S. Virgin Islands*



Pictured: U.S. Army Veteran Brian Commons and members of his Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa. From left: Karen Jeremiah, RN; Mr. Commons; Carol Lynn Marino, RN; and Primary Care Provider Priya Satish, M.D.
Photo by Ed Drohan.

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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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To Our Readers



When it comes to meeting your medical needs, it's important to be an active partner with your health care team. That's why VA uses the PACT (Patient Aligned Care Team) model to coordinate and access care that puts you, the Veteran, in the driver's seat. Read pages 4 through 6 about when, where, and how the PACT model works best for you. And, check out page 3 for details on how PACT works when you travel.

Getting a good night's sleep is an important part of staying healthy. But, a sleep disorder called, "obstructive sleep apnea," can disrupt your sleep and cause serious health problems. Turn to page 6 to learn more.

As the weather turns cooler, another sure sign of fall is being reminded (on page 7) about the importance of getting your annual flu shot, which is the best protection against the flu. And, while you're there, check out the chili recipe, which is always a favorite meal at this time of year.

Be well!

Timothy W. Liezert, FACHE
Acting Director, VISN 8

Health Benefits of Stretching

Stretching is an important part of physical fitness, along with cardio and strength-training exercises. It helps improve the flexibility of your joints (e.g., shoulder, knee, and hip), and all their moving parts. This includes your muscles, ligaments, and tendons. Better flexibility leads to many health benefits, plus improvements that make everyday tasks easier.

Regular stretching can:

- Increase muscle flexibility to work more effectively.
- Help joints have a full range of motion when you move.
- Decrease risk of falls, especially in persons with balance problems.
- Improve your posture by correcting muscle imbalances.
- Decrease risk of joint or muscle injuries, such as a torn ligament.



- Make everyday tasks easier. For example, it's easier to bend down to pick up something, or reach up to open a kitchen cupboard.
- Reduce stress by relaxing tight muscles which often comes with being too stressed.

When to Stretch?

Before exercise, it is better to stretch following five to ten minutes of warm-up exercises. After you exercise, it's also important to stretch those muscles you just used. For more tips on stretching, visit www.move.va.gov/MOVE/handouts.asp#physical.

Seamless Care for Traveling Veterans

Frequently Asked Questions

How does VA coordinate care if I am traveling or at a temporary address?

Generally, your VA Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) is responsible for your health care even when you travel.

If you see a VA provider while traveling, it will be recorded in your electronic medical record so your local VA PACT can follow up with you, if needed.

When should I contact my PACT regarding travel?

Contact your PACT or Specialty Care Provider(s) 4 to 6 weeks before you leave. They will communicate with the Traveling Veteran Coordinator who will arrange your care at the nearest VA facility to where you are staying. Provide the following details:

- destination(s) and temporary address, and phone number
- arrival and departure dates
- specific care concerns

How can I reach my PACT or provider without an appointment?

You can phone them or use secure messaging in MyHealtheVet. Register at www.MyHealtheVet.va.gov.

Why is it important to discuss my travel plans with the VA?

This allows the VA to prepare the alternate site for your arrival and avoid any disruption to your care. For example, if you have routine items that require on-going monitoring your Traveling Veteran Coordinator can make those arrangements for you in advance.



Urgent & After-Hours Care

You can call Telcare, the after-hours telephone advice care line to speak with a registered nurse. They can help to identify the care you need. The nurse places this information in your electronic medical record and notifies the appropriate medical provider. To reach Telcare, call toll-free: (877) 741-3400.

What if I Require a Hospital Admission?

Your VA provider will arrange admission with the nearest VA hospital that can meet your needs. Depending on various factors, VA may admit you to a non-VA hospital.

Emergency Care

What if I think I am having a medical emergency?

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. You do not have to contact VA in advance.

Who can I contact for more information regarding Veterans who travel?

Contact your PACT or Traveling Veteran Coordinator at your local VA facility or call toll free (877) 222-VETS (8387) Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST).

Watch the "Seamless Care When Traveling" Video!

Watch a quick and fun video to learn how your VA health care is coordinated when you travel, whether you're on vacation or temporarily moving across country for a few months. Go to www.visn8.va.gov/VISN8/news/publications.asp.



Your Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT): The Doctor Will See You Now



By Susan Wentzell with Chona Macalingdong, M.D., and Dana Ringlehan

Being there for our Veterans when they need us is a top priority in the Veterans Health Administration. PACT (Patient Aligned Care Team) is the model of care implemented in 2010 that transformed how health care is provided within the VA.

What is PACT?

PACT involves the Veteran working with health care professionals to plan for personalized, whole-person care and life-long health and wellness. It puts you, the Veteran, in the driver's seat as an active participant in your care.

How Does a PACT function?

Veterans enrolled for care at any VA medical center or clinic in the VA Sunshine Healthcare Network are assigned to a PACT. The core PACT team is made up of the patient, Primary Care Provider (physician, advanced registered nurse practitioner or physician assistant), registered nurse care manager, clinical associate, and clerk. Extended primary care team members may also include dietitians, social workers, pharmacists, mental health professionals, and other specialists, as needed.

A PACT focuses on:



Partnerships
with Veterans



Access
to care using
diverse methods



***Coordinated
Care***
among team
members



***Team-Based
Care***
with Veterans as the
center of their PACT





PACT Is the Hub of a Patient's Care

Your PACT coordinates your appointments and care, and provides you with access when and how you need it. This saves you time and energy.

Besides personal visits with your Primary Care Provider (PCP), you may schedule time with other members of your PACT. For example, if you would like to discuss adjusting your medications, you can talk to the pharmacist assigned to your PACT. This coordinated care uses the expertise of your VA health care team and helps open up appointments for other Veterans.



When you need to see several providers, your PACT can help organize as many appointments as possible in one visit. And you don't have to make several phone calls to find out about test results. Veterans with an upgraded MyHealthVet (www.myhealth.va.gov) account can see test results online, so please sign up if you have not yet done so.

Watch the Video!

Watch the "Get to Know Your PACT" video to see how PACT puts Veterans first. Visit goo.gl/tMSqYb.



PACT Offers Many Ways to Access Health Care

The Veteran is a key member of his PACT, and is encouraged to participate in his or her own health and wellness. This includes telehealth. You may access group clinics and educational seminars, as well as information through the online Veterans Health Library (www.veteranshealthlibrary.org).

With MHV's Secure Messaging (similar to email), you can communicate directly online with your VA health care team to:

- get health updates
- manage appointments
- request referrals and medication renewals
- ask non-urgent, health questions

Electronic medical records and the online MHV portal help make the process seamless.



Know Your PACT

Knowing your PACT Team is one of the most important things you can do as a patient. At many locations, Veterans receive business cards that list PACT names and direct phone extensions. Also at many sites, patients can leave voicemails on the nurse line at any time. And of course, you can send emails to your team via the MHV Secure Message feature. Sign up today!

Not Able to Keep Your Appointment?

Communication Is Key

Speaking of appointments, anytime an appointment goes unused, precious care time is lost forever. If you know you can't keep an appointment, please contact the clinic as soon as possible so another Veteran can be served.

If you are a Veteran enrolled for care at a VISN 8 facility and you don't know your PACT team, contact the following for information:

Bay Pines VA Healthcare System
727-398-6661

James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital
813-972-2000

Miami VA Healthcare System
305-575-7000

Malcom Randall VA Medical Center (NF/SGVHS)
352-376-1611

Lake City VA Medical Center (NF/SGVHS)
386-755-3016

Orlando VA Medical Center
407-631-1000

VA Caribbean Healthcare System
787-641-7582

West Palm Beach VA Medical Center
561-422-8262

Get the Facts on *Sleep Apnea*

A Patient/Physician Conversation

By Carlos Cordero, M.D.
Pulmonologist, West Palm Beach
VA Medical Center

"Many patients with sleep apnea are unaware of this while they sleep."

"Hi Doc, I'm here because my husband can't stand my snoring and he can't sleep. He's worried because I stop breathing. I feel sleepy during the day and don't wake up in the morning refreshed. What do you think it could be?"

Mrs. Smith, snoring and daytime sleepiness are symptoms of "obstructive sleep apnea". This condition causes the throat to close, on and off, while you're asleep which makes it hard for air to get in and out of your lungs. This causes snoring, or can stop the flow of air if your throat closes completely.

With decreased breathing or breath stoppage, blood oxygen levels drop which interrupts your sleep. In addition to feeling sleepy during the day, your risk goes up for developing serious health issues, such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Many patients with sleep apnea are unaware of this while they sleep. It's not until someone else notices, like your husband or partner, that they seek help.



Pictured: Dr. Carlos Cordero consults with a patient on a sleep issue at the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center.

"I see. How do I get tested for sleep apnea?"

The VA performs sleep studies in one of two ways. One test uses portable equipment that you wear overnight at home, and return to us. The other test takes place in a sleep lab for more complex cases.

"How is sleep apnea treated?"

Most patients with mild to moderate sleep apnea wear a device called a "Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP)" machine while sleeping. It provides enough air pressure to keep your throat open so you won't snore. Some surgical procedures may be used if other treatments aren't tolerated.



Weight Plays A Major Role

If you are obese, getting to your healthy weight will likely decrease the severity of sleep apnea. In some cases, it may even eliminate it. Daily exercise also helps.

"Are there any medications that can make sleep apnea worse?"

Yes, taking opiates and sedative medications can make your sleep apnea worse. Alcohol can too, so it should be avoided.

"Thanks Doc. Let's go ahead with the testing."

If you have poor sleep, talk to your VA Primary Care Provider or PACT to explore the possibility of being tested.

Get Your Flu Shot

Getting vaccinated is the surest way to protect yourself and others from getting the flu (influenza). The flu can cause serious health complications and even death. In fact, it is one of the top ten leading causes of death in the U.S.

Who should get the flu shot?

All people six months of age and older should get an annual flu shot. Those more at risk of illness and complications from the flu include:

- People with health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease
- People older than age 65
- Pregnant women
- Caregivers of infants or a family member with health problems



If you are a Veteran enrolled in VA health care, you can get a free flu shot at your nearest VA health care facility, or check with your facility about local, walk-in flu shot clinics. If you are not enrolled in VA health care, you can check your eligibility and apply online at www.vets.gov/health-care/eligibility.

Non-VA Providers and Pharmacies:

Many local pharmacies offer flu shots that may be covered by private insurance or Medicare.

Get Your Shot at a Retail Store.

VA has partnered with Walgreens so that enrolled Veterans can get their flu shot at any Walgreens that offers them. They accept most insurance plans, including Medicare. There should be no cost to Veterans. When you go, be sure to always bring your VA ID card and another form of identification.

FEATURED Recipe!

Tasty Turkey Chili

Ingredients

- 1 lb. ground turkey
- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 1 can (15 oz.) diced tomatoes, no salt added
- 1 can (6 oz.) tomato paste
- 1 can pinto beans, reduced-sodium
- 2 tsp. chili powder
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder



Directions

1. In a large saucepan over medium heat, heat oil and cook turkey until it's no longer pink. Add onion and cook until tender.
2. Add ½ cup water and the rest of the ingredients. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer covered for 30 minutes.

Nutritional Information: Serves 4. Per serving: 350 calories, 12 g total fat, 3 g saturated fat, 33 g carbohydrates, 11 g dietary fiber, 31 g protein, and 301 mg sodium.

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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



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Be A Quitter

It's been said before but it's true—you can quit smoking. Talk to your provider about how VA can help or call 1-855-QUIT-VET to get started. Join the Great American Smokeout on November 16th. Learn more at www.publichealth.va.gov/smoking.

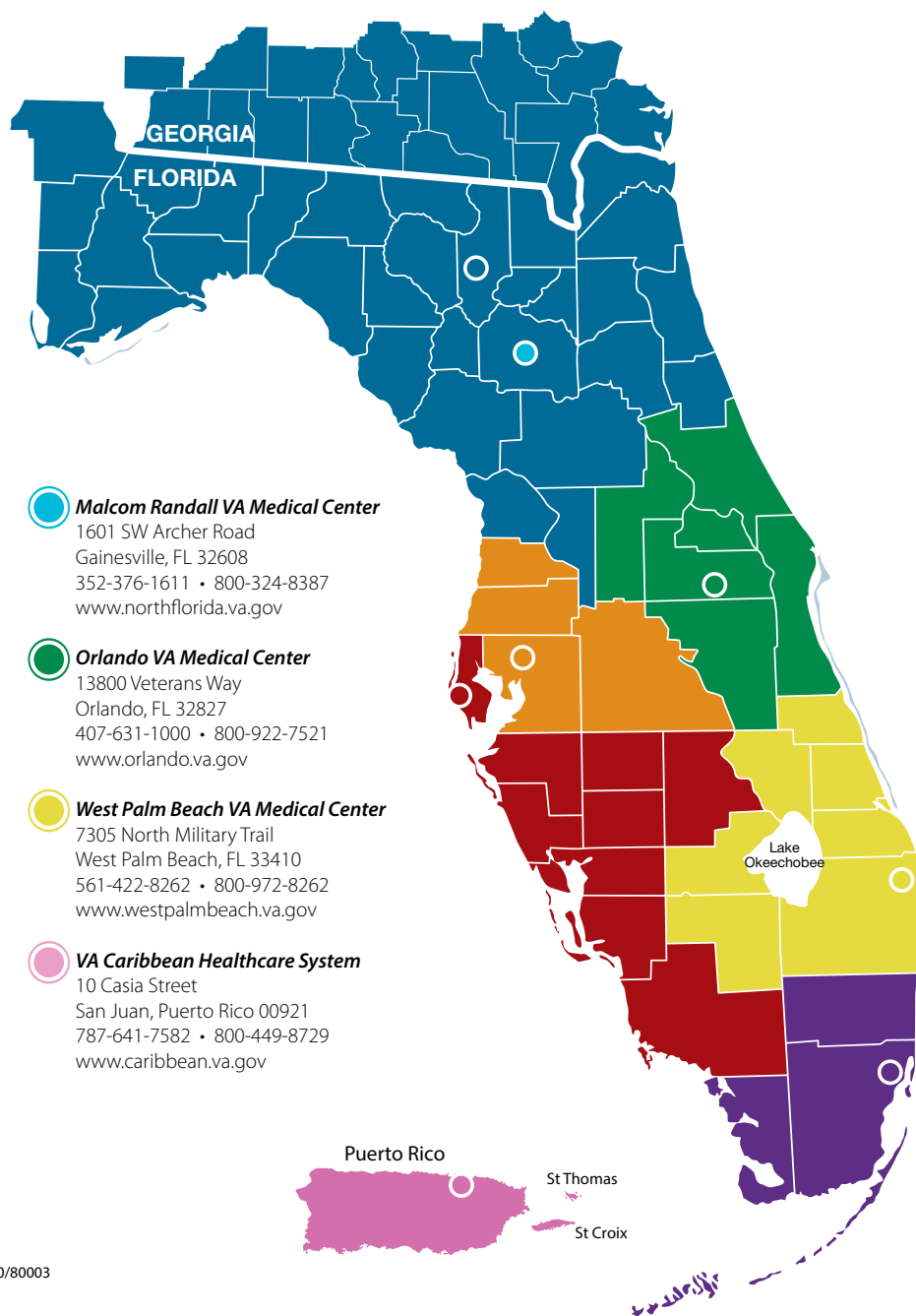
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www.visn8.va.gov



at all Medical Centers

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



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