

Finally figured out how to capture most of the briefing slides. And no contrary to the suggestion of one person, this was not some top secret RAO members only post. I just couldn't get it to open for everyone. It's called an IBM error, (idiot behind the machine) HAHA.

As promised here's a copy of the briefing used to announce the Meds change by VA.

**VA MANILA OUTPATIENT CLINIC  
CLINICAL SERVICES UPDATES FOR VSO'S**

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**VA Manila**

1/5/2022

*2021 in Review*

- Unique Veterans Treated: 5,365
- Total Prescriptions Dispensed: 153,669
- Total Laboratory Tests Completed: 90,180
- Total Radiology Studies: 1,419
- COVID 19 Vaccinations:
- Total Doses Administered: 7,507
- Pfizer 1st/2nd/Booster Doses Administered: 3,646
- J&J Primary Doses Administered: 3,861

*Exciting Plans for 2022*

- VA Manila is adding several new staff positions:
- 1.0 FTEE Psychiatry MH Provider (Staff Position)
- .5 FTEE Psychiatry MH Provider (Contract Position)

- 1.0 FTEE Staff Psychologist
- 1.0 FTEE Mental Health Nurse
- 1.0 FTEE Dedicated MH Team Scheduler/AMSA
- VA Manila is creating a Mental Health Service Line to provide greater range of mental health services across multiple disciplines.
- Psychology will be a huge addition and improve available services and help VA Manila to staff up a MH Care Team.

#### *COVID-19 Mitigation Plans – 1/10-1/14*

- Manila is seeing a significant rise in COVID-19 cases.
- VA Manila staff are impacted, and we have several staff who have recently tested positive. A number of other staff live with individuals who are symptomatic or who have tested positive, and therefore also need to quarantine.
- Clinic will be converting a number of stand-alone MH and Internal Medicine Appointments to Telephone/Video Connect between January 10 – January 14.
- Impacted Veterans will be contacted directly by OPC staff starting today and tomorrow and continuing thru Saturday.
- Veterans can reschedule an in-person appointment at a later date if that is their preference.

#### *Clinical Service Updates*

- Effective October 1, 2022, VA Manila will no longer prescribe or dispense controlled substance medications to Veterans in the Philippines.
- Controlled substances are dangerous drugs, with a high likelihood for dependency which can have a detrimental effect on a person's health and wellbeing.
- Controlled substances include:
- Opiate medications for pain management (buprenorphine, fentanyl, morphine, oxycodone, pregabalin, and tramadol),
- Mental health medications (alprazolam, clonazepam, diazepam, eszopiclone, methylphenidate, phenobarbital), and

- Anabolic steroids (testosterone).

*Clinical Services Update (cont.)*

- Why is VA Manila making this change?
- VA's mission is to provide exceptional medical services that improves Veterans' overall health and well-being.
- New research and studies have shown that the long-term use of controlled substances to treat chronic pain, anxiety, and/or PTSD may no longer be 'optimal care'.
- Use of controlled substances carries substantial risks for patients – overdoses, toxicity, other complications.
- VA Manila has limited ability to implement VA's Opiate Safety Initiative or the Clinical Practice Guidelines for controlled substances, due to the availability of complementary services available in the Philippines (e.g.: acupuncture, chiropractic services, physical/occupational therapy)

*Clinical Services Update (cont.)*

- VISN 21

*Clinical Services Update (cont.)*

- The COVID-19 Pandemic has also highlighted several challenges that make continued prescribing of controlled substances from VA Manila challenging.
- Natural disasters, such as typhoons, earthquakes, and even volcanic eruptions (Taal 2020 for example), have caused disruptions with VA's supply chain.
- Work stoppages / quarantine protocols impact courier services ability to deliver medications timely.
- VA's Office of Inspector General's Jan 2021 report on Medication Delivery Delays at VA Manila highlighted several challenges
- <https://www.oversight.gov/report/VA/Medication-Delivery-Delays-Prior-and-During-COVID-19-Pandemic-Manila-Outpatient-Clinic>

*Clinical Service Update (cont.)*

- Veterans currently receiving these medications from the VA Manila OPC will be contacted individually and a personalized care transition plans will be developed to ensure continuity of care.
- Impacted Veterans will be presented with one of several options, which includes:
- Switching to non-controlled substance alternatives and continuing to receive those new medications from VA Manila providers
- Transitioning care to community providers in the Philippines and request reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses from the Foreign Medical Program
- Relocating to the United States to continue receiving controlled medications from other VA facilities in the United States.
- All options will be presented to Veterans by their providers, and a plan developed to ensure safe transition to optimal care is available

*Clinical Service Update (cont.)*

- VA Manila nurses and physicians are working to identify community resources and service providers who can assist Veterans wishing to transition their care to community providers.
- Veterans who require medications for service-connected conditions are eligible to seek reimbursement from VA's Foreign Medical Program – or receive care from an FMP Participating Provider.
- Some Veterans may be able to work with their provider to switch to alternate prescription medications that VA Manila will still be able to prescribe after 10/1/2022.

*Clinical Services Update (cont.)*

- What are the next steps?
- Important to note no changes are happening immediately. This change will not take final effect until 10/1/2022 – but we need to begin planning and working towards this objective now.

- Veterans with scheduled appointments with their providers in the next 3-4 months can wait until their next appointment to begin having discussions about transitioning care. Veterans without scheduled appointments before April 1, 2022 should contact VA Manila to get an appointment scheduled.

### *Contact Information*

- Ways that Veterans may contact VA Manila:
  - From the Philippines
    - +63 (02) 8550-3888, Option 2
    - [#MyVA](#) (#6982), Option 2
    - Fax: +63 (02) 8550-3964
  - From the United States
    - +1 (808) 433-5254, Option2
  - From Anywhere via Internet
    - MyHealthVet Secure Messenger
    - <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/user-login>