Understanding the VA
Improving Coordination Between Community Hospice Care and the VA

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HONORING PREFERENCES AND PROVIDING EXCELLENT CARE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BORNE THE BATTLE...
Objectives

▪ Differentiate between traditional Medicare hospice benefit and VA hospice benefit; discuss “Concurrent Care.”

▪ Introduce our local VA HPC Leader and the Clinical Resource Hub

▪ Understand the hospice referral process for a Veteran.

▪ Review Billing Processes for VA.

▪ Discuss VA Community Living Centers.

▪ Discuss other VA services and Death Certificates.

▪ Answer your Questions!
Introductions
We are so grateful for the love and compassion you all show our Veterans and our team. THANK YOU for partnering with us!
Veteran-Centered Care

The mission of VA’s Hospice and Palliative Care Program is to honor Veterans’ preferences for care at end of life.

Since 1996, the VA has guaranteed that Veterans will have access to (and payment for) hospice and palliative care services on par with any other medical treatment.
VA: Hospice v. Palliative Care

- For VA, Hospice akin to the Medicare benefit.
- Veterans in the last 6 mo of life elect for comfort priority care in the home, wherever that may be.
- VA doesn’t provide its own home hospice, works with YOU ALL!
- VA does provide its own residential hospice, within it’s Community Living Centers (and rarely hospitals), depending on the facility.
VA: Hospice v Palliative Care

• For VA, palliative care is the specialty interdisciplinary team attention to Veterans with serious illness.

• Patients are seen in clinic, by video, by telephone, or in the home.

• The VA Palliative Care Team tends to:
  • Symptom support
  • Goals of care, advance care planning
  • Spiritual and emotional suffering, including PTSD
  • Aligning VA services and benefits that may exist
    • Aide services
    • Dream Foundation wish
    • Caregiver program, and more!
VA: What is Concurrent Care?

Care provided during hospice care that is directed at improving the status of a disease state... not just comfort.

- Treating a UTI
- Chemotherapy for comfort life prolongation (5 mo vs. 2 mo, for instance)
- Radiation for comfort or life prolongation
- Trying to heal a wound
Concurrent Care and Hospice

* What are some examples of disease modifying treatments we do on hospice care commonly?
  ◦ Diabetes management
  ◦ Working up infection and treating with antibiotics

*How many of you have cared for a Veteran still receiving concurrent care at VA?
  ◦ Radiation
  ◦ Palliative Life Prolonging Chemo
  ◦ Dobutamine... and more!

*How many of you have hospices that do disease modifying care?
VA: Concurrent Care

• VA ALLOWS for Veterans to receive Concurrent Care while on hospice care with you.

• This means that on hospice, some Veterans may be returning to see their VA doctors, this is ok!

• We still expect you all to attend to all the comfort needs of the patients, and the dying process.

• We know that sometimes these situations are not clear cut, do your best!
VA: Palliative Care Access

- Frankly speaking, access to palliative care, as you know, can vary depending on your location in MS or LA.
- Some VAs have robust Palliative Care services, some have less.
- All VAs, however, authorize home hospice.

- Because access is variable, we want to introduce Dr. Kimberly Garner, our area Palliative Care leader in Arkansas who will discuss a resource for your Veterans.
  - Just FYI, in VA lingo we call our VA national area “VISN 16”
Strategies to Improve Hospice Engagement

- VISN 16 is the area pictured here
- Continued development of our Hospice and Palliative Care CoPs
  - Review clinical and administrative data
  - Share best practices
  - Collaborate on quality assurance/process improvement
- Developed report of hospitalized Veterans with high CAN scores

- Engage in VISN 16 Veterans Community Partnerships
- ELNEC training held for all VISN 16 facilities in FY22 and FY23 with planned ELNEC trainings quarterly going forward
- Developing HPC services through the Clinical Resource Hub
The Hospice and Pall Care Clinical Resource Hub

Experienced Hospice and Pall Care Physician and Mental Health Specialist who can provide teleservices to:

- VA Medical Center
  - Inpatient
  - Outpatient
  - eConsult
- Veteran’s residing at:
  - Home, even with hospice!
  - Long-term care
  - State Veterans Home
  - Inpatient hospice
How Might the Hub Help You Care for your Hospice Veteran?

• Palliative and Hospice Medical Care Needs
• Mental Health Care, including PTSD
• How do community hospice providers contact the Hub?
Moving onto... VA Hospice Referral Process
Criteria for hospice

Life expectancy of 6 months or less if the terminal illness runs its normal course.
VA Honors the 4 levels of care

- Routine Home Care
- Respite
- Continuous Care
- General Inpatient Hospice

How do you request payment change for a different level of care from VA?
Where will VA pay for Hospice Care?

- Home
- Nursing Home
- Inpatient Hospice in the Community
- Community Living Center (VA facility) residential hospice care
  - Yes! If your patient is a Veteran on home hospice, they can be transferred to a VA facility for hospice care.
VA: How Referral Works

• Nurse at VA receives the consult for Hospice from a VA provider.
  • Appropriateness of the referral is assured.

• Nurse calls the Veteran or next of kin.
  • Is hospice accepted by the Veteran?
  • Do they understand the benefit?
  • Do they have a home hospice agency of preference?
  • Do they prefer Medicare or VA pay for their hospice care?
VA: How Referral Works

• RN calls area hospice to assess if able to meet needs of Veteran
  • If Veteran has no agency preference, rotates through a list.

• RN Faxes to Community Hospice Agency
  • Authorization
    • Needed for billing
  • eConsult received from the Provider
    • = Certification of Terminal Illness, a separate CTI is not required for VA payment!
  • Most recent notes, history and physical, any palliative care notes, labs, images, and etc.
VA: Repeat Authorizations

- New Authorizations are needed from VA each new Benefit Period.

- We expect, like Medicare, a Face to Face visit each authorization period, and a copy of these before authorization will be considered.

- Benefit Periods
  - 1\textsuperscript{st}: 90d
  - 2\textsuperscript{nd}: 90d
  - 3\textsuperscript{rd} and on: 60d
Introducing OPTUM!

Optum is the Third Party Administrator for VA Community Care.

Community Hospice
Does VA Work with ANY home hospice company?

New Provider sign-up for OPTUM

- Request for Contracting and Credentialing
- 1-888-901-7407 7am to 7pm central
- www.Vacommunitycare.com/provider
Payment Questions

• OPTUM, the third party administrator, now handles hospice billing.

• Please see in the chat box the Adobe file for how to enter a claim, and common questions.

• OPTUM operates a portal for claims to be submitted.
  • Fax is also allowed.
  • Claims must be submitted within 180 days.
  • If a denial is received, you have 90 days to resubmit an appeal.
Payment Questions

• Should I call the VA directly with billing questions?
• So who handles authorizations, the VA or OPTUM?
• So who handles appeals, the VA or OPTUM?
• Common pitfalls/things to avoid.
VA Community Living Centers

• Provide Hospice Care for Veterans who Reside there.

• Has a CLC
  • Alexandria
  • New Orleans
  • Biloxi
  • Jackson – under renovation

• No CLC
  • Shreveport – has “inpatient hospice” in the hospital
What makes CLC hospice different?

• Not GIP hospice

• More residential, like a nursing home

  * Why are we good?
    ◦ Well staffed, loving, private rooms
    ◦ Physician and/or Nurse Practitioners Rounding many times a week

  * Who are we not good for?
    ◦ Caregivers who need to stay around the clock
    ◦ May not die in 6 months... (COPD, I’m looking at you!)
    ◦ Desires to come and go from VA room (need to be near bedbound)
HOSPICE CARE IN THE CLC
We hope that many of you have heard about the We Honor Veterans Program.

This is the best way to train your staff on the unique care of Veterans, and have fun doing it!

LMHPCO has been SUCH a promoter of assuring good Veteran care
• VA Hospice Taskforce
Death Certificate

• Many Veterans have illnesses that are related to their time in service.
• These are called “Service-Connected” Illnesses.
• The Veteran is typically aware of their SC illnesses; when in doubt – ask us!
• When completing a death certificate, a spouse may have an easier time getting the benefits he/she/they deserve if the service-connected illness related to the cause of death is on the death certificate.
  • Associated Conditions is a great place for these
• Examples
  • Heart Failure, service connected for Hypertensive Vascular Disease
  • Lung Cancer, delays treatment due to PTSD
Home hospice Veterans are often eligible for MORE than just home hospice at the end of life.

- Non-skilled services, on top of the maximized aide care you are providing
- Durable Medical Equipment
- Return to VA for eye visits, podiatry, etc, where possible.
- Aid and attendance benefit
- Caregiver benefits
- Death benefits
- Burial benefits
  - Funeral home can help!
  - Find that DD214 (discharge form from the military)!
New Orleans HPC Contact Information

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Who
What
Where
When
Why
How
Questions
Answers