



FACILITY OVERVIEW

The Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, is a complexity level 1C VA teaching hospital which provides a full range of patient care services.



THE MEDICAL CENTER OPERATES:

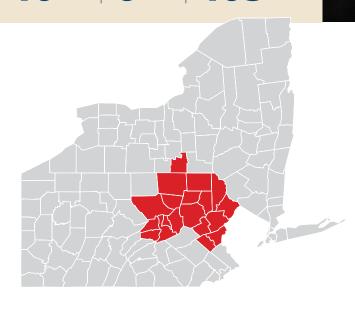
10 ICU 6 PCU 105 CLC BEDS

Comprehensive healthcare is provided through Primary Care, Medical and Surgical Specialty Care, and Mental Health Programming. Geriatrics and Extended Care services are also offered, including long term care, respite, rehabilitation, dementia care, hospice and palliative care, transitional care and a variety of home care services.

The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center is part of the VA Healthcare - VISN 4 Network along with eight other medical centers in Altoona, Butler, Coatesville, Erie, Lebanon, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Wilmington.

2023 Operating Budget

Total Operating Budget	\$511,451,434
Medical Services	\$292,522,535
Facilities	\$24,979,000
Administrative	\$21,553,924
NRM Projects	\$3,150,028
Care in the Community	\$169,245,946



Service Area

The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center primarily serves Veterans from 18 counties in Pennsylvania: Bradford, Susquehanna, Lycoming, Sullivan, Wyoming, Lackawanna, Wayne, Pike, Union, Montour, Columbia, Luzerne, Monroe, Carbon, Northumberland, Snyder, Northampton and Lehigh; and one county in New York: Tioga.

Unique Veterans/Visits

Facility	Unique Veterans	Visits
Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center	32,295	304,519
Allentown Community Based Outpatient Clinic	9,227	59,099
Cedar Crest Boulevard	1,799	5,252
Columbia County Community Based Outpatient Clinic	1,528	3,051
Northampton County Community Based Outpatient Clinic	1,350	4,200
Sayre Community Based Outpatient Clinic	2,192	14,762
Tobyhanna Community Based Outpatient Clinic	559	1,725
Wayne County Community Based Outpatient Clinic	1,000	2,350
Williamsport Community Based Outpatient Clinic	3,568	16,327
Total	37,976	411,285

^{**}As Veterans are often seen at more than one facility, site specific unique data contains redundancies. As a result, the sum of the site-specific data exceeds the actual number of Total Unique Veterans.

FY2023 Center For Development & Civic Engagement (CDCE)

Total Impact	\$919,908.27
Volunteer Hourly Value Impact	\$505,198.65
Monetary Donations	\$51,971.91
Activity Donations	\$23,758.09
In-Kind Donations	\$338,979.62



15,887

Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center



172 TOTAL **OPERATING BEDS**

10 SUBSTANCE ABUSE **RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION**

INPATIENT

LIVING CENTER







Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center





350 VETERANS



418 NURSES



133 PHYSICIANS

A Message From THE DIRECTOR



"I'm very proud of the way we have expanded choices and service for our Veterans, and we will continue, along with our dedicated staff, to always strive to give them our very best."

> **Russell E Lloyd** Director, WBVAMC

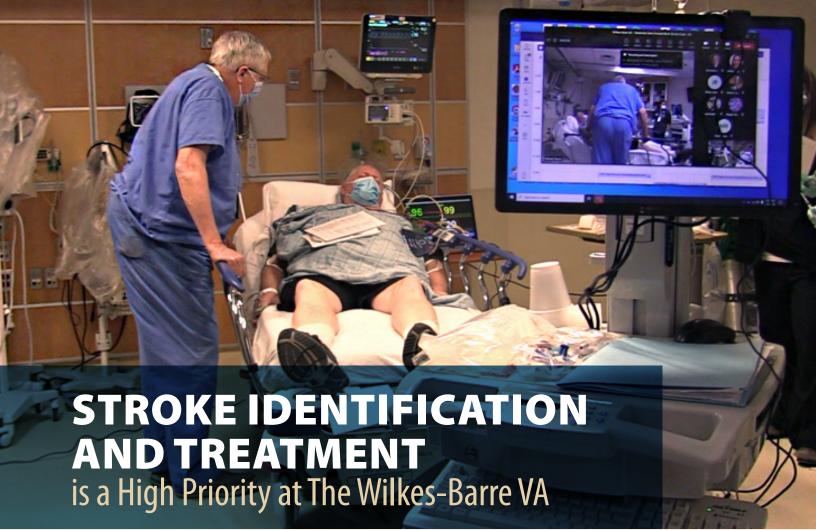
In conversations with Veterans over the past few years, a common theme often arises. "The Wilkes-Barre VA is a lot better now, than it was years ago." That is not to say in the past that our staff didn't give Veterans the best possible care. It's because we have more to offer them today, healthcare wise, than ever before.

Over the past 5 years, we have expanded services. Our Wilkes-Barre VA's Catheterization lab has developed into one of the regions' best. Our experienced Eye Care Clinic uses some of the industry's most state-of-the-art eye care equipment, offering a full range of eye care services including specialty exams for cataracts, glaucoma, plastic surgery, and retinal services. The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center's Hemodialysis Program has performed above standard in all defined performance measures for hemodialysis treatment every year since 2014. The bariatric surgery program in Wilkes-Barre has been recognized as the top federal facility nationally to be accredited by the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program.

This past year, Veterans in Wilkes-Barre have also had an opportunity to take part in several preventative testing and screening programs. A few months ago, we expanded our Women Veterans health services by opening a new Mammography Suite on our medical center's second floor.

All the aforementioned advancements along with a few I didn't have a chance to mention, have resulted in our medical center being elevated from a complexity level 2 VA facility to a level 1C VA medical center. I'm very proud of the way we have expanded choices and service for our Veterans, and we will continue, along with our dedicated staff, to always strive to give them our very best.

Russell E Lloyd, Director





When a health care provider strives to be the very best, such as the VA, it takes knowledge, diligence, and training for any and all emergency situations. One of the most critical emergencies they face is that of a possible stroke. Rapidly identifying, diagnosing, and treating a stroke is very critical. Nowhere is that more evident than in the Wilkes-Barre VA's emergency department.

Training for this type of emergency happens on a regular basis at the Wilkes-Barre VA. Wilkes-Barre takes part in a Semi-Annual mock stroke code drill, set up by the VA's National Telestroke Program (NTSP).

The drill, which is simulated in real time, puts to the test the emergency response of our emergency department team, when a patient come in with stroke like symptoms. A nurse driven protocol is used to initiate what's called a "Code Stroke". This facilitates a time guided blueprint. Speed and accuracy are of utmost importance since the clot busting stroke medication (TPA) needs to be administered within 4 1/2 hours of the patients' last known well time. The team knows the door to needle time critically impacts the patient's outcome. Every 15-minute delay is linked to possible disabilities after a stroke.

The staff in the Wilkes-Barre VA emergency department take pride in their work, and the practicing of stroke drills ensures a timely response for stroke patients to facilitate the best possible outcome for them.

Once the nurse initiates the code stroke and the time restrictions are determined, the patient is seen by an on-call physician, who orders one of the most important tests, a CAT Scan. The goal for completing the CAT scan is within 20 minutes. The goal for the results to be read and back to the emergency room physician or provider is within 30 minutes. The speed of the response is needed to determine if the patient is a candidate for the clot-busting drug TPA (Alteplase).

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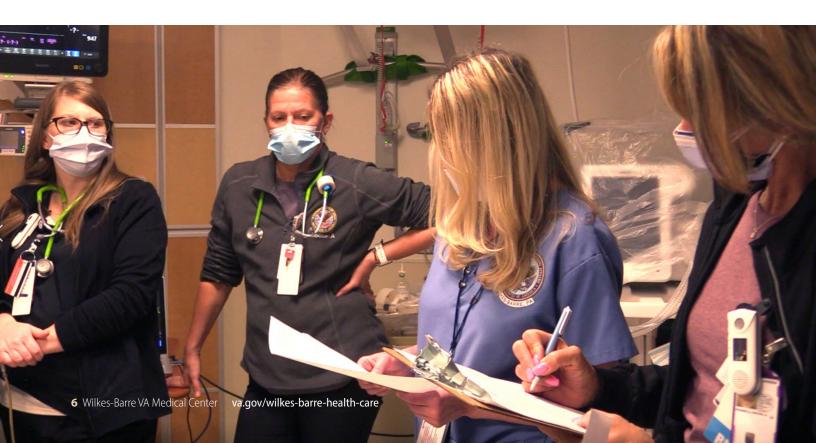
"The nurse protocol helps us measure objectively our performance to meet the stroke benchmarks and goals. Time restrictions are in place to insure the most positive outcome for our Veterans. The Tele-stroke program is basically a nurse driven protocol. The first nurse to evaluate the patient makes the decision to call the Code Stroke. The directive is written in our policy and procedures to energize our teamwork. Concurrently, we bring our doctors on board and ultimately optimize our potential stroke patient's outcome."

Rachel Frankelli RN, Manager WBVA ED Part of the protocol is to monitor the patient's blood pressure. The stroke patient must have their blood pressure under 185 (the top number) in order to give the clot busting medication (TPA). Pressure lowering medication can be used to bring their level under the threshold, since pressures higher than 185, eliminate the ability to administer the TPA medication due to adverse risks to the patient.

New Technology utilized during the Telestroke process helps the caregiver obtain the patient's health history in real time. A recent surgery, head trauma, head bleed, or current use of anti-coagulant is important to know. As is, the recording of a recent stroke and recent administration of the clot busting TPA medication. The presence of these factors would eliminate the re-dosing of TPA.

Stroke readiness is a high priority, and the Wilkes-Barre VA puts great emphasis on meeting our stroke response and treatment goals. Practice makes perfect and taking part in the VA's National Telestroke Program only makes our team better. Veterans can be assured that the Wilkes-Barre VA is at the forefront of stroke identification and care.







Cancer does not discriminate, just about everyone knows someone who has or did have cancer. Past national cancer studies have shown that Veterans have a slightly higher cancer rate 1.4% than the general public. Regardless, cancer is one of the leading causes of death throughout the world, right up there with cardiovascular diseases.

Local Veterans may soon have a chance to test a new cancer screening tool — all through a blood draw. The Department of Veterans Affairs and the Veterans Health Foundation have partnered with GRAIL, LLC, to provide Veterans access to GRAIL's groundbreaking multi-cancer early detection (MCED) blood test. During this trial, GRAIL will make its Galleri MCED test available to 10,000 Veterans across approximately 10 sites over the next three years. The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center (WBVAMC) will be one of those sites.

The goal of the blood-screening test, which is part of the REFLECTION clinical real-world evidence study, is to find multiple types of cancer at an early stage when treatment is most likely to be successful.



"We have made tremendous progress in the treatment of cancer. Early detection is important in improving overall outcomes and reducing cancer burden in our Veterans population.

The Galleri® Test aims to complement standard cancer screening tests by extending cancer early detection to other cancers that do not currently have a standard screening test."

Dr. Si-yuen MoyStaff Hematologist-Oncologist
at the WBVAMC



The Galleri test demonstrated the ability to detect more than 50 types of cancer, over 45 of which lack recommended screening tests today. The test, which has a low false positive rate of less than 1%, also determines the origin of the cancer with high accuracy.

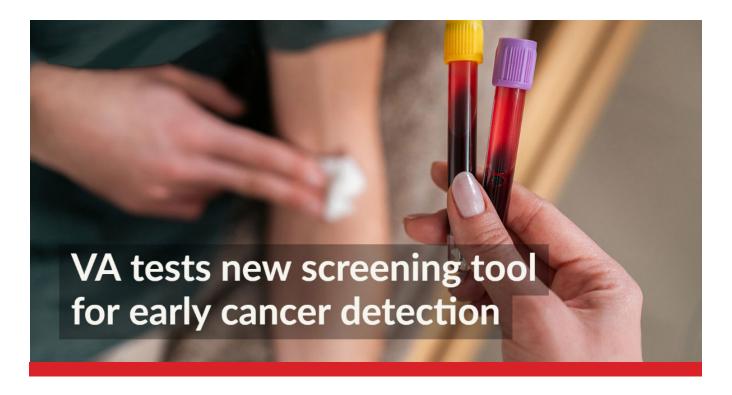
Breast, cervical, colon, lung, prostate, liver, and kidney cancer are among the 50 types of cancer detected by the blood draw test.

The Galleri test is recommended for use in adults with an elevated risk for cancer, such as those age 50 or older. The Galleri test may not detect a cancer signal across all cancers and should be used in addition to routine cancer screening tests recommended by a health care provider. Use of Galleri is not recommended for individuals who are pregnant, 21 years old or younger, or are actively undergoing cancer treatment.

Results should be interpreted by a health care provider in the context of their medical history, clinical signs, and symptoms. A test result of "Cancer Signal Not Detected" does not rule out cancer. A test result of "Cancer Signal Detected" requires confirmatory diagnostic evaluation by medically established procedures (e.g., imaging) to confirm cancer.

> False-positive (a cancer signal detected when cancer is not present) and false-negative (a cancer signal not detected when cancer is present) test results do occur. The Galleri test has not been cleared or approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. GRAIL's clinical laboratory is regulated under CLIA to perform high-complexity testing. The Galleri test is intended for clinical purposes.

By offering the Galleri MCED test to the Veterans at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, our hope is that it will lead to more cancer diagnoses at an earlier stage, when treatment is more likely to be successful. Saving lives through early detection is the goal. Having this type of test available to our local Veterans at the Wilkes-Barre VA is very encouraging, especially since 45 of the cancers it detects lack regular recommended screening tests today.





The VA's text messaging service "Annie" that empowers Veterans to take an active role in their health care, is now accessible on the My HealtheVet website.

Veteran users who already have a My HealtheVet account can now directly launch Annie for Veterans by visiting the link in the Resources section of the My HealtheVet home page.

If you do not currently have My HealtheVet, visit the website at https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/home. Once registered you can start using Annie along with refilling your VA prescriptions, keeping track of appointments, messaging you VA health care team and viewing, printing or downloading you VA medical record information.

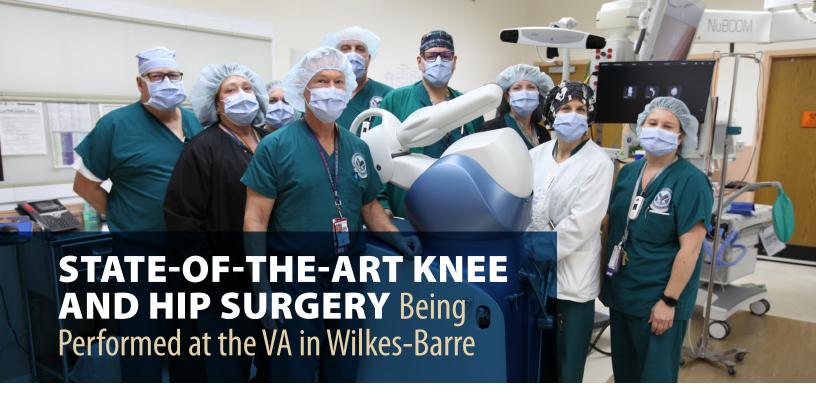
Annie allows you to sign up for automated text messages which can include reminders to take your medication, tips for reducing stress, instructions to prepare for your health care appointments, and more.

Annie can also send general broadcast messages from the Wilkes-Barre VA medical center or on topics that interest you.

The App will also allow you to see graphs of your measurements and all your messages in the online version of Annie for Veterans. Information that you send through Annie will be available to your care team. Contact your care team directly if you want any specific data reviewed.







Over the past 20 years or so, advances in technology have made joint surgery less evasive to the point where patients can usually go home the same day. One such advance is being used daily for hip and knee replacement surgery here at the Wilkes-Barre VA.



The Mako SmartRobotics system is an advanced robotic arm that is used to assist surgeons with accurate and precise bone cutting that can shorten the Veteran's hospital stay and leave them less dependent on pain medication.

"When performing knee surgery, the Mako gives us super accurate bone cuts that come out perfect every time. When doing the hip, the robotic assist enables us to get the exact anteversion (forward tilt) & offset needed so that the hip can perform as expected long into the future."

Dr. David Ball, Surgeon, Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center

With the accuracy and precision this unit brings, the replacement joints fit together exceptionally well, which can cut down on the surgical time and leave the patient with less pain and less recovery time.

"I just saw a veteran for a follow-up who had a Mako hip replacement at the Wilkes-Barre VA. He stopped taking his pain pills in 3 days and at just under 3 weeks, he was able to get rid of his walker. He also stated that he walked 4 miles the day before I saw him to take out his staples from his hip."

- Dr. David Ball, Surgeon, Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center

To date, three Wilkes-Barre VA surgeons have gone through the Mako certification process and are performing advanced robotic arm surgery.

The Wilkes-Barre VA is the first VA hospital in the state to deploy the Mako SmartRobotics system. The system requires the patient to get a full cat scan on the joint area prior to surgery, instead of the traditional x-rays done in the past. This allows the surgeon to see all angles of the replacement area prior to starting.

The use of state-of-the-art robotic technology at the Wilkes-Barre VA is just another way we're making VA healthcare better for Veterans. Less pain, a more accurate fit, less recovery time and less dependence on pain meds means the Veteran patient is getting the very best that the Wilkes-Barre VA has to offer.



Wilkes-Barre's Healthy Teaching Kitchen occurs every second Wednesday each month from 11 am- 12 pm in our 2nd floor rec room, and online via VA Video Connect. Veterans interested in attending can contact Emily Fasciana, Dietitian at 570-824-3521 Ext. 24746.

Every VA Facility across our country offers a Healthy Teaching Kitchen (HTK) program to help Veterans eat healthier. The definition and goal of the program can be found in its name, to teach Veterans and their support people how to prepare healthy foods on their own.

The HTK program here in Wilkes-Barre schedules classes every month that promote nutritionally balanced meals, how to shop for certain foods and ingredients, and meal planning to promote healthy living. Through program participation, we try to build confidence in cooking healthy meals at home while minimally using processed foods.

"I want all Veterans to know that eating is not just for health, but for enjoyment too. I will provide you with simple, quick, tasty, and healthy recipes that you will want to make on your own."

- Emily Fasciana, VA Registered Dietitian

To spice things up in the coming months, Wilkes-Barre's HTK classes are going to incorporate preparation of cultural cuisine dishes. An excellent "Cooking Around



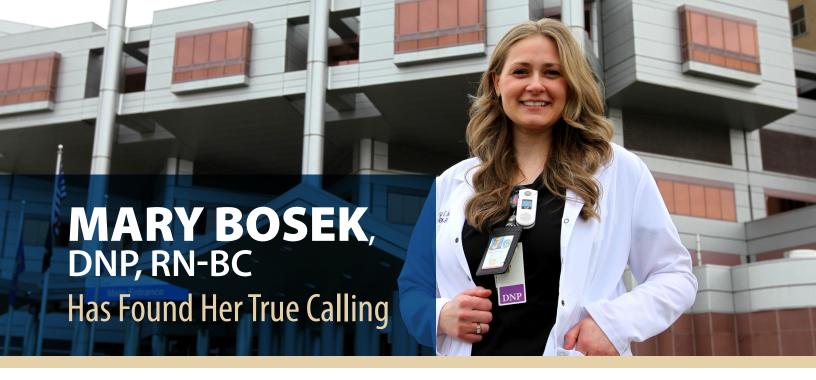
"Programs like HTK also talk about the fact that Veterans never learned HOW to eat or what they should eat during their service. Their service time was not about enjoying food, it was about nourishing their bodies however they could."

> Emily Fasciana VA Registered Dietitian



the World" cookbook which was developed by the VA National HTK Program will be utilized to introduce our Veterans to healthy cultural dishes.

Enrolled Veterans could also take advantage of the many informational health programs offered here in Wilkes-Barre VA, such as, the MOVE weight management program, support groups, and individual



It's no secret that the VA in general has some challenges retaining good young health care professionals, but that is a topic for another day. So, when you find one that feels that this is the place they need to be, it's refreshing.

Mary Bosek's journey to where she is today is anything but typical. Mary grew up in Wilkes-Barre's north end, one of four children to loving parents Stanley & Theresa Buckley, who are both masters prepared nurses. They wanted to encourage each of their children to find their passion in life.

"When I was in high school, I wanted to go into the Air Force. My Grandparents were Veterans. I remember they came to Coughlin High School to recruit, and I remember signing up to serve that's what I wanted to do."

Mary Bosek DNP, RN-BC

During the Air Force recruitment process, they looked at Mary's health history and asked her if she had any past surgeries. Mary said yes and explained what it was. Unfortunately, the Air Force ended up denying her enlistment on those grounds. Mary was devastated!

Knowing she wouldn't get into the service, she thought she knew what she wanted to do as a career. Mary's dad, Stan, sparked her interest in photography when she was 12 years old when he built a darkroom to develop photos in their basement. So, after high school, Mary decided to go to Luzerne County

Community College (LCCC) to pursue a degree in commercial art and photography and eventually graphic design. By 2011, she had her degrees and started working in a portrait studio.

"I was working in the portrait studio inside of Walmart and there was a little boy who clearly was sick. He looked like he had cancer. He had no hair; no eyelashes and you could tell he was a very sick guy. I remember he came up to the studio area, I said, "how are you doing?" It was right after Christmas and I asked him, "what did you get from Santa?" "What did Santa bring you?" He said, oh nothing. I didn't get anything from Santa for Christmas. It broke my heart; I don't know if the family was poor or what the situation was. When I think about it, I still get emotional. I remember going to the back of the studio, where we used to use little bears to make the kids laugh. I grabbed a little bear, and I gave it to him, and I said," this is for you, this is from Santa", and he put it on his shoulders and walked away. At that moment, something clicked., It was like a light switch went on, and I said to myself, I'm going back to school to be a nurse. I want to work with children with cancer."

Mary Bosek DNP, RN-BC

Mary's parents suggested that she become a nurse's aide before making the decision to pursue a nursing career, just to be sure.

Mary went back to LCCC to become a certified nurse's assistant. Soon after completing the program, she started working in a local nursing home. Two good things came out of her nursing aid experience: One, it strengthened her desire to pursue her nursing degree, and two, she met her future husband, Matt.

In 2014, Mary graduated from the LCCC nursing program and started her nursing career at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, on a telemetry floor. She was only there a short time when she applied and was hired to work with open heart surgery patients.

"When working with open heart patients, you are

responsible for that life. I loved it, I loved critical care, but there were tremendous highs when a patient goes home and tremendous lows when you do everything you can, and the patient doesn't make it. - Mary Bosek DNP, RN-BC

While working in a hospital setting,
Mary continually looked for scholarships
and multiple educational opportunities,
which lead her to earn her bachelor's degree
in nursing from Misericordia University in 2016.
Followed by her master's degree from Wilkes University
in 2019.

"My parents and I had kind of a running joke. I said to them, I'm going to catch up to you guys. I said I'm going to get my master's degree and we're going to be tied. Then I remember there was a moment when I just graduated that was very moving. My Dad said congratulations. Now what? I looked at him and said, I'm not done yet. You see that hat over there, the one the doctoral students are wearing? I want that hat. So, the joke was always, oh you did it for the hat, which is not true, of course. He said OK. If you get through it, I will be proud to call you doctor Bosek."

- Mary Bosek DNP, RN-BC

During Mary's medical career, she has been blessed to work with both her parents in a clinical setting. She accepted an opening in Wilkes-Barre General's Cardiac Cath Lab and had a chance to work with her dad in the same unit. Mary remembers when she was younger, being at the dinner table when her dad's

pager would go off, and he would have to leave to help save someone's life. Now both their pagers were going off to help save the same patient. Mary has also had a chance to work with her mom, Theresa, who currently is a nurse here at the Wilkes-Barre VA.



"Working with both my parents has most certainly been one of the highest honors in my life."

Mary Bosek
DNP, RN-BC



Mary treated VA patients in the ICU during the pandemic, while also pursuing her doctorate in nursing. She has such admiration

for our Veteran population and was very passionate about making their lives better. Mary was fortunate to be able to complete her doctorate dissertation, here at the Wilkes-Barre VA. Her project focus was to start an oral care initiative for Veterans to decrease hospital acquired pneumonia. She created a Standardized Oral Care Kit or SOCK. She initially started her project in the VA's intensive care unit; however, the initiative was such a success that the Wilkes-Barre VA decided to implement it in other parts of the hospital.

In October 2021, Mary officially finished her Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree from Wilkes University and is currently Specialty Clinic nurse manager on 3 west. Less than two months after becoming a doctor, she and her husband Matt welcomed their first child into the world. Their second child is due this Fall.

As far as what the future holds, Mary would prefer to have a long career here at the VA, which is great news for our local Veterans. She feels a connection to her Veteran grandparents here and is honored to care for such a unique population. There's nowhere else she'd rather be.



Women Veterans are the fastest growing population in all of VA healthcare. The Wilkes-Barre VA has been expanding women Veteran's health services for years, and now we are proud to announce that we are opening a new Mammography suite on the second floor at the medical center.

"Having a mammography suite on site allows Women Veterans an opportunity to get all-inclusive care here in one place instead of traveling outside the VA System."

- Dr. Joseph Rienzi, Chief of Radiology, Wilkes-Barre VA **Medical Center**

One thing that is unique about the placement of the new Mammography suite is that it sits adjacent to the ultrasound room. So, if they see an area of concern, the patient doesn't even have to get out of the same gown. They could just go over to the adjoining room and have the ultrasound performed immediately.

The new mammography suite can also accommodate someone who is wheelchair or stretcher bound. At 4 feet in width, the entry doors allow easy access, and the suite also features a special chair for patients if they have limited or no ability to stand.

The brand-new state-of-the-art unit, in addition to mammograms, also has an attachment that will do stereotactic breast biopsies. If an abnormality is detected during the mammogram and a stereotactic

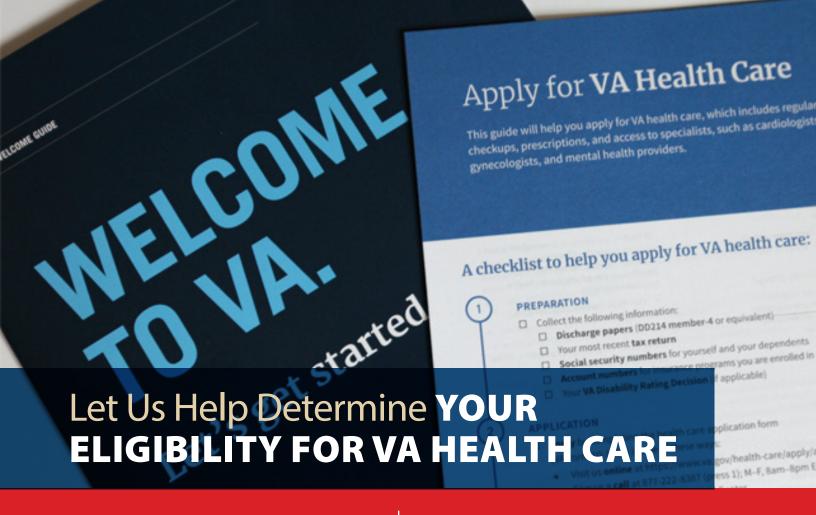
biopsy is needed, it can be done right then and there with this new attachment. The attachment gives the doctor two different angles to pinpoint the best area to take a tissue sample.

"The nice part about having this new suite is that it is really accommodating for Veterans with disabilities. The modernization of this suite, along with it having its own private corridor to our ultrasound room, allows us to offer the use of two complementary studies, as soon as possible, and you get your answer right then, instead of having to wait 2 or 3 days for a determination."

- Dr. Gisele Lafond, Radiologist

The new mammography suite which opened on October 19th during breast cancer awareness month, gives Veterans a chance to get all their tests and exams done in one place on the same day. If there are concerns, they could be addressed asap on the same visit. That is a big Win moving forward for the Veterans that this will serve.

The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center's radiology department just received great news. We have been informed that our new mammography suite has been granted a three-year Accreditation from the American College of Radiology's (ARC) Committee on Mammography Accreditation.



THE VA CURRENT NUMBER OF VETERANS SERVED IS AROUND





CALL 570-824-3521 **Select Option 4**



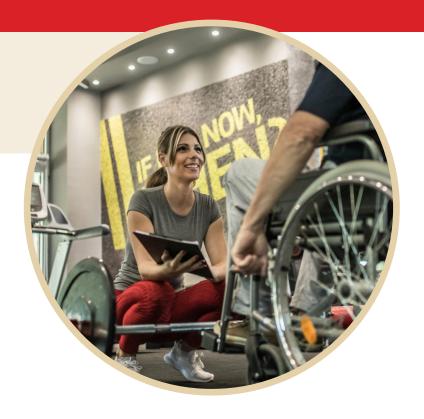
EMAIL WilkesBarreEligibility Group@VA.gov

The VA currently serves around 9 million Veterans. At the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, we have a variety of health care services to meet your needs.

If you're a Veteran who has never applied for VA healthcare or if you have previously been determined ineligible but have experienced a significant change in earning potential or health, give us a call or shoot us a message and let us help determine your eligibility for health care services.

The Wilkes-Barre VA serves Veterans from 18 counties in Pennsylvania and one county in New York state through our Medical Center in Wilkes-Barre and seven Community Based Outpatient Clinics.

A Veteran may still be eligible for VA Health Care even if they have private insurance.





LOCATIONS

Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center

1111 East End Blvd. Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711 570-824-3521 / 877-928-2621

Allentown Community Based Outpatient Clinic

3110 Hamilton Blvd. Allentown, PA 18103 610-599-0127

Cedar Crest Boulevard VA Clinic

1605 North Cedar Crest Boulevard Roma Corporate Center, Suite 410 Allentown, PA 18104 610-599-0127

Columbia County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

226 Columbia Mall Drive Bloomsburg, PA 17815 570-316-4116

Northampton County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

701 Slate Belt Blvd. Bangor, PA 18013-9341 610-599-0127

Sayre Community Based Outpatient Clinic

1537 Elmira Street Sayre, PA 18840 570-888-6803

Tobyhanna Community Based Outpatient Clinic

Tobyhanna Army Depot Building 220 Tobyhanna, PA 18466 570-615-8341

Wayne County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

600 Maple Avenue Honesdale, PA 18431 570-251-6543

Williamsport Community Based Outpatient Clinic

1705 Warren Avenue 3rd Floor Suite 304 Williamsport, PA 17701 570-322-4791



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