

>> This program is underwritten by the VA New York, New Jersey Healthcare Network. Welcome to VA Healthcare Advantage. I'm John Mazzulla, Vietnam era veteran, VA employee, your host for today's show. VA Healthcare Advantage is brought to you by the VA New York, New Jersey Healthcare Network, a network of eight VA medical centers and 32 community clinics located on Long Island, metropolitan New York, north central and south New Jersey and in New York's Rockville, Westchester, Orange, Sullivan and Ulster Counties. VA Healthcare is aired to discuss healthcare and related topics for the nearly one million military veterans, their families and the general public. Our guests today are Lori Winterfeldt and Denise Horton, who are My Healthy Vet coordinators, one for the network and one for VA New York Harbor Healthcare System. VA New York Healthcare system is the Manhattan or New York VA, Brooklyn VA and the primary and extended care center in Queens. Welcome to the show.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> We're gonna talk about My Healthy Vet and some of the features of My Healthy Vet. One is secure messaging. But before we do that, Denise, tell us a little bit about yourself. How did you happen to be in the position you're in now? How long have you been with VA?

>> I've been with the VA just over three years. I came to the VA in 2007. In September, I was a recreation therapist in the Northport VA and then this opportunity came up last year and I was hired and moved to the New York Harbor Healthcare system.

>> Okay. Hopefully, your commute is not too terribly bad driving in from Long Island to Manhattan. Or do you live in Manhattan?

>> I take the train.

>> Take the train. There we go.

>> So the Long Island Railroad.

>> Okay. So they're your best friends.

>> As of late, they're okay.

>> Okay.

>> There's been some issues but we're good.

>> Okay. And Lori, what about yourself? Where, how did you happen to come to VA? How long have you been here?

>> I've been with VA also like Denise, almost three years. I started out actually at New York Harbor as chief of the library service and my background has been in library service and healthcare administration and public affairs over the years. So, when this opportunity came up as a librarian, I was already involved with My Healthy Vet, but as part of the transformation effort, this opportunity came up to really work and publicize it throughout the network. I thought it was a great opportunity and decided to move in that direction as well.

>> Hmm mm. So, you both have been in this role for about three years and My Healthy Vet has been going on a bit longer than three years, but there seems to be a big push as of late for My Healthy Vet, right?

>> Yes.

>> Let's start there. I'm sure our listeners are wondering, what My Healthy Vet is? So, what is it? Who's gonna go?

>> I'll start. My Healthy Vet is the personal electronic health record that veterans can access from anywhere 24 hours, seven days a week online and they can register, sign up for an account. And once they do that and become what we'll talk about which is in personal authenticated, it allows them to collect and manage their health information, parts of medical record are available through the My Healthy Vet portal. But it also allows them to do a wide variety of functions related to their healthcare such as prescription refill, communicating through electronic, electronically with their providers and a whole host of other features. And it's a very valuable tool for today's veteran and veteran patient.

>> Hmm mm. So, a veteran who gets care at VA and has a treatment team of sorts or a physician or some other primary care provider or provider, I guess is the word I'm looking for, if they have a computer at home that theirs, they can actually sign into what's called My Healthy Vet and Lori, I know you mentioned this, but let's just break it up a little bit. They can sign into My Healthy Vet which is a website, a VA website.

>> It's a VA website.

>> Hmm mm.

>> And it's been set up so that veterans can securely log into it.

>> Hmm mm.

>> That only they are able to have the password or anyone that they want to share it with.

>> Hmm mm.

>> Such as a healthcare, a caregiver.

>> Hmm mm.

>> So, what they would do is set that up and once they're in the site, they can do a variety of things. One of the most popular features is to view their actual medication. So, for example, if they get medications from VA pharmacies, they will see those medications in there and rather than refill them via in the phone or in person, what they could do is refill them right there online and if they have other medications that they get from non-VA providers, they can add that information in there so that they have a coordinated record of that.

>> Hmm mm.

>> They can also set up for themselves, if they want to put together, their health history, military health history, so that they don't have to keep repeating that information.

>> Hmm mm.

>> And much of this information can be printed out and shared with the providers that they choose to do that with.

>> Hmm mm.

>> So they only are the ones seeing this information, but it's up to them if they want to share that information with others.

>> Right. So the medications that they perhaps are taking that weren't prescribed by VA, they could just load that information in themselves and then if they wanted to, they could share that with their doctor or at least they'd have a place where everything was.

>> That's correct.

>> Right. Is there any limit to the amount of information that can be put in?

>> At this time, I don't think there is. There are many modules that are set up that can monitor vitals such as their blood pressure, their weight. They can enter all this information on a daily basis, on a weekly basis, as little or as much as they want to.

>> Hmm mm. I see. You know what it reminds of me when I think, Denise, you mentioned this, it's like signing onto a bank's website and doing, you know, sent, paying bills or transferring money around.

>> It is just like signing onto a bank website. You again, have your user ID. It's unique to you and then you have your own password.

>> Hmm mm.

>> And as Lori has stated, you can give that password out, but that is for you to do. We can, once we sign you up or once you register yourself, we cannot go in without your permission.

>> Hmm mm.

>> So, if you have any problems with some of the function, a new function is the appointment list. And some of the appointments are not showing for any of the veterans. I've been suggesting to the veterans themselves to contact the My Healthy Vet link. There's a link that you can write your, you can send them a message and say, my appointments are not because if you come into a coordinator's office and the help line is busy, they won't give us any information unless you're sitting with us and they hear it from you that yes, we can go into your account.

>> Hmm mm.

>> So, it is safe. And sometimes, it's easier to take advantage and empower yourself to ask your own questions instead of always coming to the healthcare system to ask a question.

>> Hmm mm. Actually, my bank that I do electronic banking with has that same function that I could, if I have a question about something, you can just sign right on the website, you can just ask your question. It's normally answered within about 24 hours.

>> Right. The My Healthy Vet site does have a, the note on the website does say five to 10 days because there are so many people using the site that it's not just go and, they, they're not available all the time to answer it quickly enough.

>> Right. Hmm mm.

>> But they do say five to 10 days.

>> With a response.

>> What's really exciting about My Healthy Vet and what's being done with it is in many ways it's way ahead of what's being done on the commercial side of healthcare that for the first time, a lot of these features are being put together in one portal with single access. There will be portions this kind of a system that are available at outside systems, non-VA systems. However, it really is unique in terms of what VA is doing and trying to do.

>> Hmm mm.

>> So that's what, I think, really exciting to all of us working in the system and working with veterans.

>> Hmm mm.

>> Because it really is a tool for empowerment.

>> Hmm mm. So, Lori, you mentioned that one of the features on the My Healthy Vet site is veterans can see medications that they're taking and they can actually order when they need to, you know, refill a prescription.

>> That's correct.

>> They're just doing this right through the computer, not making a phone call, not having to visit the pharmacy.

>> Right. And with the way that all of our lives are going, and especially as more younger veterans are entering the system, they're very much comfortable with operating in this way and it's allowing us to set up multiple channels for veterans to communicate.

>> Okay.

>> And ask questions.

>> Okay. Well, we're gonna take a real quick break and we'll come right back to this. But before we do, veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan who, you have had your eligibility extended for VA healthcare from two to five years. If you've served in Iraq or Afghanistan, you are encouraged to enroll for VA healthcare and receive the care you have earned and deserve. Also, tell us how you like the show. Call the VA Healthcare comment line at 1-866-214-1847. If you get voicemail, leave a name and a phone number and I will call you back. We're gonna take a real quick break.

>> If you have the chance, will you help save the life of one of our nation's veterans, someone you know? I'm Deborah Norville. If you're the mother, sister, spouse or friend of a veteran who seems angry, sad, or isolated, you may be seeing warning signs of depression or suicide. Some of these warning signs can be that the veteran seems disconnected from family or friends, starts to give away prized possessions, displays anger or rage, or overreacts to problems. The VA is reaching out to help, so please reach back. If your loved one is a veteran, and if you even think you see these warning signs, call 1-800-273-TALK and press one. That's 1-800-273-TALK and press one. Don't second guess yourself. Reach out for help.

>> Welcome back. This is VA Healthcare Advantage. My guests for today is Lori Winterfeldt and Denise Horton and we're talking about My Healthy Vet and the features on My Healthy Vet. My Healthy Vet is a website that veterans who are receiving care at

VA can elect to sign onto and we're talking about the features of that program. You know, before we went on break, we talked about one of the features of the My Healthy Vet portal was the ability to view and order medications. I can think that people would immediately recognize how good that would be. Wouldn't be having to dial the 1-800 number or run to the pharmacy and standing in a line. And also you can actually view certain parts of your medical record. Is that right?

>> You can view the wellness reminders that appear in your medical record.

>> Uh, huh.

>> And they are working on enabling labs and homology results to be released to the medical record. Really, it's abstracts of your, or pieces of your medical record.

>> Pieces of your medical record. Uh, huh.

>> That are being fed into the My Healthy Vet account that you have set up.

>> Uh, huh.

>> So, you still have to go through the regular procedures of release of information if you want a full copy of your record. However, as My Healthy Vet develops, more and more of these features are being released.

>> Hmm mm.

>> And you can see more and more aspects of your record and you'll see that as time goes on.

>> Hmm mm.

>> But the important thing, I think, is really to set up the account so that once you're set up, as they roll the features out, the features are available will be automatically available such as the appointments and the labs and hematology and such. And you'll see as new innovations come in that you'll have access to them right away.

>> Okay. What are the features around the website, the My Healthy Vet website?

>> At this time, you can see your appointments.

>> Appointments. Now, that would be another really handy, nifty thing to do. Right?

>> Yes. Actually, it is because then you can schedule your own personal calendar which they provide on the website.

>> Uh, huh.

>> Within your calendar.

>> Uh, huh.

>> So, you can see your appointments. You can, again, see wellness reminders.

>> What is a wellness reminder? Tell me what that is.

>> Some of the wellness reminders, there are 12 wellness reminders that are viewed at this time. And one of them is mammogram screening, cervical cancer screening, colorectal cancer screening, your LDL control, your lipid, to name a few, your BMI.

>> Right. So, these would be notices that would pop up and say, gee, you know, the next time you see your doctor, you need to remind him that you need your, you know, you need to have a PSA done or your cholesterol checked, that sort of thing?

>> Correct.

>> Time for a flu shot, that sort of thing.

>> Yes. Your flu shot is one of them also.

>> Hmm mm.

>> Pneumonia is on there. Your diabetic foot exam, if you're a diabetic.

>> Hmm mm.

>> Your HBA1C is on there.

>> You better tell me what that is.

>> That's your blood, that's a blood test.

>> Uh, huh.

>> In order to check for levels.

>> Hmm mm.

>> And then your retinal exam for diabetics.

>> Hmm mm.

>> Are on there.

>> Hmm mm. These are reminders for the veteran or a caregiver to remind the physician or the provider at the appointment what's popped up and discuss with them that these are necessary or needed.

>> Correct. And you could also, and we'll probably get into this, message them, message your provider and say, I have these reminders popped up.

>> Right.

>> Maybe we should talk about them at my next appointment. Again, the system is set up to empower the veterans.

>> Hmm mm.

>> To take care of their own healthcare and not just sit in the chair and listen to what the provider is saying.

>> Right.

>> Well we need to do this and this and this. You know, you want to empower yourself to go in and say, I haven't had this done in a year.

>> Right.

>> Isn't it time?

>> Right.

>> It would prompt the veteran to make an appointment if they see that something is due sooner rather than later.

>> Can an appointment be made through My Healthy Vet?

>> At this time, you can request an appointment.

>> Hmm mm.

>> Through the secure message link.

>> Okay. Before we get to secure messaging, I mean, I know that we're all itching to get there in the discussion, but I want to provide a foundation about what My Healthy Vet is. So, you can perhaps schedule, well, actually you can just, you can request an appointment, but maybe as the My Healthy Vet website advances, is that something that folks have talked about?

>> It's been out there under discussion.

>> Hmm mm.

>> And as we mentioned, a lot of these functions are being developed as we speak. So it may appear in the future. It's not in the real near future.

>> Hmm mm.

>> Meaning the next couple of months.

>> Hmm mm.

>> But it's not out of the realm of possibility.

>> Right. Are there any other features that we've missed about talking about the website?

>> The other feature I think that is important is the medical libraries that are available.

>> Hmm mm.

>> They are, again, there is terms and conditions on all of the to in order to use the prescription refills, you have to terms and agreements and policies, and one of the policies is that although it might be written, it's still a web based library, medical library.

>> Hmm mm.

>> But I will tell you that some of the physicians in the Harbor are using the library themselves.

>> Hmm mm.

>> So, we encourage you, the veterans to use the medical libraries and then come and discuss their decision or their case with their provider before they take action.

>> Hmm mm.

>> As in any other medical.

>> Right. Well, Lori, give me an example of what that is. What does that mean, a medical library?

>> A medical library is a collection of information that is brought together from various sources and in the case of My Healthy Vet, that collection is from a variety of non-profit and or non-governmental and governmental sources, [indistinct] which is through the

National Library of Medicine, that's information. And we get some of our information through there as well as Health Wise, which is another company that puts together decision tools and other information that would be of value to patients. What's very important and what we've talked about amongst the coordinators is the library itself, because it's vetted information, it's reviewed by a clinical team. There's a national advisory board that views this information. It's vetted information that is known to be reputable from reputable sources. So, you don't have to worry that you just looked up a site on the internet and you don't know where that came from and as a medical librarian myself, trained, that's very, very important.

>> Hmm mm. So, a veteran might use it in this example. You know, they went to see their doctor. The doctor said, gee, you know, your blood pressure might be a little high. A veteran could go home later and sign onto My Healthy Vet, look up high blood pressure on this portal and then just read information, medical information about high, you know, high blood pressure.

>> That's correct. They could go in and just access that information.

>> Hmm mm.

>> And then if they had questions further about their own condition and the information they found, they're really encouraged to go back to their VA provider and discuss it with them and they can show them what they've found.

>> Hmm mm.

>> And they have a common base of information to speak about.

>> Hmm mm. And all sorts of information is available this way. Not, you know, would cancer information about cancer be there? Would information about high blood pressure, well, high cholesterol? That would be there also?

>> A variety of health topics that affect veterans and their families are available through the My Healthy Vet portal. Absolutely.

>> I see. Hmm. You know, we're gonna take another quick break. We'll be right back.

>> Did you know the New England Journal of Medicine, the National Council of Quality Assurance and the Annals of Internal Medicine all cited the VA for providing high quality health care? Did you know that the VA offers a full continuum of healthcare services including health promotion and disease prevention, mental health, primary care and special healthcare programs for women veterans? Did you know that VA healthcare is portable? With over 1400 sites of care across the nation, veterans enrolled in VA can be seen any VA facility across the country. To apply for the healthcare services you deserve, stop by the eligibility office at the nearest VA Medical Center and complete a

1010 EZ form. You can also apply online at [www.va.gov/elig](http://www.va.gov/elig) or by calling toll free 1-8-7-7-2-2-8-3-8-7.

>> Hi. This is John Mazzulla and you're listening to VA Healthcare Advantage. Our guests today are Lori Winterfeldt and Denise Horton who are My Healthy Vet coordinators, one for the network and one for VA New York Harbor Healthcare System and our topic is My Healthy Vet which is a web based portal for veterans who are enrolled for care at VA to use where they can access a secure website and get information about appointments in the future, order medications that they've been prescribed so there's a lot of, we just talked about the medical library so there's actually reputable information on that website about various health conditions. Was that a good roll up?

>> That is a good roll up.

>> Okay. Now, I know we want to talk about secure messaging. I certainly do. I actually am enrolled in My Healthy Vet so I can go and access information on there. I've been in person authenticated, I'll have you know.

>> Excellent.

>> So, what's the buzz about this secure messaging aspect of the My Healthy Vet website? What's this all about?

>> Secure messaging is a secure electronic means of communication with your providers. It allows you to ask questions that may have either occurred to in between visits or if you have questions about specific instructions that you've received from your providers or something has come up in terms of medications that you're on, all of these things can be often addressed using secure messaging. What's great about it is you can just get on anytime that you even think about it and literally write your message whether it's at 2:00 in the afternoon or 10:00 at night or 3:00 in the morning. So, depending on what your need is, you can just get right on there, send a message to your team of providers and within three business days, you'll receive an answer regarding your question.

>> Hmm mm.

>> And what is great about it is it really empowers patients to be active and not wait necessarily 'till the next appointment.

>> Hmm mm.

>> And not have to wait in terms of the phone, being on hold from time and time and we know our VAs are and this is another way to accommodate communication that's direct and get an answer to questions more quickly than maybe you would via phone or other methods.

>> Hmm mm. What is it like? Explain to me what it's like. You're on the website. Does it look like, I mean, most of us are familiar with using email. Is it like email?

>> It is like email. But again, it's, if you're doing online banking, you have to log into the portal. It never leaves the portal. So it's not going from the My Healthy Vet portal to Yahoo. You get notified in your home email address when you have a notification just as the same in banking online.

>> Hmm mm.

>> But it looks, when you open it, it looks like an email screen.

>> Right.

>> You would press new message, your provider's name comes on and if you see more than one provider, there's a drop down menu. You pick the provider. At this time, only the [indistinct] providers are on within the [indistinct]. And then you would just put your message down.

>> Yeah. And it's just like typing on a keyboard as you would on regular email.

>> Yes.

>> And you keep, you know, you keep mentioning the word, secure, and it's secure because it's like a bank's website is secure. It's not going anywhere else. It's not going into the webisphere. It's really a direct communication with the portal which is a secure website at the VA.

>> Correct. When we receive notification in our Outlook boxes, we don't even know what veteran sent the message. It says, you have one or more secure messages waiting for you from [indistinct] one and they list the doctor. And then you have to click on the link within the message and it sends you right to the My Healthy Vet site.

>> Hmm mm.

>> We need to log on just as the veterans would need to log on.

>> You have your own password.

>> You have your password.

>> And your own code.

>> Correct. And then you open it up and your message is waiting right there.

>> Hmm mm.

>> So.

>> Gee, Dr. So and So, You know, I had a, I didn't feel well yesterday. I'm wondering if it's a blood pressure issue. What do you think I should do? It could be any kind of message.

>> It could be anything.

>> I want an appointment that's sooner than, that sort of thing.

>> Yes.

>> And it's important to note that it shouldn't be used for emergency situations. So, someone is experiencing symptoms that they think maybe a heart attack or something such as that. They should obviously go to their emergency room, local emergency room or to the VA urgent care. But they shouldn't be questioning about that kind of situation on secure messaging.

>> Okay. Gonna take our next and last break but we'll be right break.

>> Hello. I'm Keith [indistinct]. Each year, thousands of people just like you are providing hours of dedicated and rewarding service to veterans and VA hospitals in our community. I'd like to extend an invitation to you to join our team. As a volunteer, your involvement will let our veterans know that their service to America has not been forgotten. For more information about volunteering, contact your local VA medical center or log onto our website. Thank you.

>> Okay. Welcome back. This is VA Healthcare Advantage. My guest today, our guests today are Lori Winterfeldt and Denise Horton, both of whom are My Healthy Vet coordinators. And our topic is My Healthy Vet and it's about a website where veterans can sign in once they agree and it's a secure website and veterans or family members can sign in and access some healthcare information, access appointments, review medications, maybe reorder medications and we have been talking about secure messaging which is like email but it's secure. Nobody else can see it where a veteran can ask a question of their treatment team. How'd I do?

>> Excellent.

>> Okay. You know, we're almost out of time. Take about 30 seconds. Tell us what our listeners should remember about this show that they listened to. What's the big take away here?

>> I really think that the take away should be, what is your time worth?

>> Hmm mm.

>> People are working. People are just coming back from the areas of conflict and, you know, they have childcare and they have a lot of stuff. They're going out to look for jobs or returning to jobs. They've already had so much time off that they can't really take time off to go to the walk in clinic and if they can be taken care of through the My Healthy Vet system, then I would definitely recommend this.

>> Hmm mm.

>> Another point that I would like to make is that you know, if you're coming back and you're putting a claim into VBA, you can get authenticated through the My Healthy Vet system so that you don't have to go down to [indistinct] Street.

>> Hmm mm.

>> Otherwise you have to take a day off just to get into Manhattan.

>> Right.

>> To do that. So, you know, I would definitely suggest that everybody come out and register. You can register at home and then come into your local VA or your [indistinct] and get IPA'd.

>> Okay. Lori, you've got about 15 seconds.

>> For short, we should remember what the actual site is for My Healthy Vet.

>> Okay.

>> It's [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov).

>> Okay.

>> And so, that's the site you should access from home or wherever you have internet access to register.

>> Okay. Very good. Thank you both for being here on the show today. I'm sure this is good information for veterans. I, myself, use this website. VA Healthcare Advantage is aired to reach military veterans residing in the metropolitan New York, New Jersey area. For additional information, [www.nynj.va.gov](http://www.nynj.va.gov).