

# NETWORK UPDATE

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July 2015

**VA Midwest**  
Health Care Network  
*Honoring Service. Empowering Health.*

## New VA Leaders Shulkin and Council Take Oaths of Office to Lead Health Care, IT

Dr. David J. Shulkin and LaVerne Horton Council today took the oath of office where they will serve respectively as Under Secretary for Health and Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology and Chief Information Officer for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Both were nominated by President Obama and confirmed by the Senate on June 23.

“Dr. Shulkin and Ms. Council bring stellar experience and exceptionally strong leadership to their posts,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. “Both will play critical roles in making VA a stronger organization for America’s Veterans, and I am looking forward to working with them.”

Dr. Shulkin comes to VA immediately from the position of President at Morristown Medical Center, Goryeb Children’s Hospital and Atlantic Rehabilitation Institute, part of the Atlantic Health System. Prior to joining Morristown Medical Center and Atlantic Health, Dr. Shulkin served as President and CEO of Beth Israel Medical Center in New York, where he led a financial turnaround and rebuild of the \$1.3 billion organization.

Dr. Shulkin also has served in numerous physician leadership roles at the University of Pennsylvania Health System, the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University Hospital and the Medical College of Pennsylvania Hospital. He is a board-certified internist, a fellow of the American College of Physicians, Professor of Medicine at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine and a Senior Fellow at the Health Research and Education Trust of the American Hospital Association. He earned his medical degree from the Medical College of Pennsylvania and completed his internship at Yale University School of Medicine.

As Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Shulkin will direct a health care system with an annual discretionary budget of approximately **\$60 billion**, overseeing the delivery of care to more than 9 million enrolled Veterans. VA, the nation’s largest health care system, employs more than 350,000 total employees including over 305,000 health care professionals and support staff at more than 1,200 sites of care, including hospitals, community based outpatient clinics, nursing homes, domiciliaries and 300 Vet Centers.

Ms. Council most recently held the positions of CEO at Council Advisory Services, LLC and Chair of the National Board of Trustees for the March of Dimes. In December 2011, she retired from Johnson & Johnson after serving as Corporate Vice President and Chief Information Officer for Johnson & Johnson’s global IT group. In this capacity, she was responsible for managing IT and related systems for the \$61.6 billion Johnson & Johnson worldwide enterprise. She was a member of the Corporate Global Operating Committee and her organization included more than 250 operating companies with more than 4,000 information technology employees and 7,000 contractors.

Ms. Council earned a Master’s of Business Administration in Operations Management from Illinois State University with a Bachelor of Science in Business from Western Illinois University. In 2010, Ms. Council was presented with a Doctorate of Business Administration, Honoris Causa from Drexel University.

As VA’s Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology and CIO, Ms. Council is the single leadership authority for IT and is the principal advisor to the Secretary on all matters relating to the management of VA’s Office of Information and Technology.



## Upcoming Veteran Town Halls



**Sept. 16** - Sioux Falls VA HCS  
with Dakotas Regional Office, 5:00 pm  
at the Mitchell, S.D., fairgrounds



**Sept. 24** - Iowa City VA HCS,  
Rock Falls, Illinois

*Follow your facility on Facebook for  
more information*



## St. Cloud VA, To Host Annual 'Summer Games'

St. Cloud VA Health Care System will host its "Summer Games" as part of its focus on the Department of Veterans Affairs "Summer of Service" initiative.

The games will be held Aug. 1 at the Fitness Clinic, Bldg. 48, Room 16. Registration begins at 8 a.m.

The schedule of events is as follows:

- 9 a.m., Opening Ceremony
- 10 a.m., Events Begin
- 1 p.m., Final Competitions Begin
- 2:30 p.m., Awards Ceremony

Events include badminton, horseshoes, weightlifting, billiards, pool, and a one-mile walk/run.

The event is open to all Veterans who are enrolled at the St. Cloud VA HCS. There will also be wheelchair and ambulatory care divisions.

Registration packets can be picked up in the Fitness Center.

For more information, contact Leah Egan at 320-252-1670, ext. x9,6180.

Water and first aid services will be available. Bring your own lunch.

The Summer of Service initiative is designed by the VA to strengthen the bonds between Veterans and the individuals and organizations that provide services to Veterans in the St. Cloud area.



# VA Study to Compare First-Line Gout Therapies



Dr. James O'Dell, Bruce professor, and chief of Rheumatology and Immunology at the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System, and the University of Nebraska Medical Center, is the primary investigator for a four-year, \$23 million VA cooperative study titled "Comparative Effectiveness in Gout: Allopurinol vs. Febuxostat."

The study will include 950 patients from contracted sites around the country, including VA NWHCS, other VA health systems, UNMC, and various Rheumatoid Arthritis Investigational Network (RAIN) sites. With gout being a common ailment in many Veterans receiving care at the VA, the study could lead to significantly improved outcomes.

"The prevalence of gout in patients with renal failure is upwards of 30 percent," said Dr. O'Dell. "Our study will be the first time that a substantial number of patients with kidney disease who have gout will be studied."

Dr. O'Dell said that there is a gout epidemic occurring. Four percent of the population has gout, and the number is increasing rapidly. It has become the most-common form of inflammatory arthritis in adults. It is also associated with significant morbidity and mortality in older men and magnified in patients with chronic kidney disease.

Documentation shows gout is the most mismanaged chronic disease there is, Dr. O'Dell said. Ninety percent of patients with gout have problems with chronic gout. This number should be less than 10 percent, if properly managed. According to the proposal for the study, two drugs have been endorsed as first-line treatment for gout, allopurinol and febuxostat. Both drugs are effective and generally well-tolerated; however, febuxostatu costs considerably more.

However, according to a previous survey of 179 VA practitioners, febuxostat appears to be the drug of choice, according to Dr. O'Dell. The reasoning seems to be the perception that febuxostat provided superior efficacy and tolerability. The study will compare the two therapies for lowering uric acid levels to see which is the most clinically and economically effective.

*(Reprinted courtesy of UNMC).*



<p><b>St. Cloud VA</b> Health Care System Brainerd   Montevideo   Alexandria</p>	<h1>UPDATE</h1> <p>May/June 2015</p>
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*For more information:*

[www.visn23.va.gov](http://www.visn23.va.gov) | (651) 405-5600

*Produced by VISN 23 Office of Public Affairs*

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## July - Calendar of Events

### Fargo

8-July	<a href="#">Drop-in Legal Clinic for Veterans</a>	Fargo VAMC, 3 <sup>rd</sup> floor auditorium	9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
13-July	<a href="#">Sleep School</a>	Fargo VAMC	9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

### Nebraska-Western Iowa

7, 14, 21, & 28 July	<a href="#">Lincoln Regional Benefit Office Field Office at Lincoln VA Clinic</a>	Room B20, 600 S. 70th Street, Lincoln	8:00 AM - 4:00 PM
7 & 14-July	<a href="#">Lincoln Regional Benefit Office Field Office at Omaha VA Medical Center</a>	Room 1103, 4101 Woolworth Ave, Omaha	8:00 AM - 4:00 PM
18-July	<a href="#">In Memoriam</a>	Lincoln VA CBOC Auditorium	10:00 – 11:00 AM
15-July	<a href="#">VA Regional Office Field Office - Grand Island VA</a>	Room S508, 2201 N. Broadwell Ave, Grand Island VA Clinic	10:00 AM - 2:30 PM

### Minneapolis

Daily	<a href="#">Red Carpet Orientation</a>	Minneapolis VAMC 1st floor flag atrium	10:00 - 11:00 AM
7-July	<a href="#">MOVE! Introduction Class</a>	Minneapolis VAMC, Room 4E-136 (held Tuesdays & Thursdays)	12 - 1 PM
7-July	<a href="#">Farmers' Market</a>	Minnesota VAMC, first level of parking ramp	Varies

### St. Cloud

7 & 14-July	<a href="#">VA Caregiver Support Group</a>	St. Cloud VAMC, Bldg. 48, Rm. 204, and Brainerd CBOC via Vtel	12:00 - 1:00 PM
7-July	<a href="#">Veterans' Law Clinic</a>	St. Cloud VAMC, Bldg 28, Room 126	12:00 - 2:00 PM
17-July	<a href="#">Voices for Veterans Radio Show</a>	WJON AM 1240	8:10 - 8:45 AM
14-July	<a href="#">Annual Patio Party</a>	Clearwater Travel Plaza, 950 St. Highway 24	4 PM

### Sioux Falls

8, 13, 15, & 20 July	<a href="#">Tai Chi</a>	Sioux Falls VA, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor Auditorium	3:30 – 4:30 PM
9 & 16 July	<a href="#">Chair Yoga</a>	CLC 3 Dining Room - 3rd Floor Bldg 5	3:30 - 4:30 PM
7, 14, & 21 July	<a href="#">Gentle Yoga</a>	4th floor in Auditorium	3:30 - 4:30 PM