

Guest Editorial

Kenneth R. Jones, PhD



The VA MOVE! Program: A Giant Step Forward for Preventing and Treating Overweight and Obesity

Recognizing that many of the diseases veterans face today are related to overweight and obesity, a group of VA primary care providers attending the 13th Annual VHA Ambulatory Care Managers Meeting in the summer of 2001 identified effective weight management as the most pressing preventive medicine issue. In response, the VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention developed an evidence-based program, known as Managing Overweight/Obesity for Veterans Everywhere (MOVE!).

The first comprehensive federal program to address obesity, MOVE! provides clinical and administrative guidance, patient and staff educational materials, and online resources. The program was designed using the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Obesity Education Initiative's 1998 clinical practice guidelines.¹ It focuses primarily on helping veterans self-manage overweight and obesity, with support from their primary care providers, through changes in diet, physical activity, and behavior.

To assist health care providers in implementing the program, several reference tools are available on the MOVE! web site (<http://www.move.va.gov>). One key instrument is a 23-item questionnaire, called the MOVE!23, that helps assess a veteran's weight history and motivational factors and identify potential difficulties in modifying physical activity, diet,

and other weight-related behaviors. Available in both electronic and "paper-and-pencil" versions, the questionnaire may be used by VA primary care providers as part of routine patient assessment or by interested veterans who discover MOVE! on their own.

On completion of the MOVE!23, veterans receive a summary report, which identifies their specific needs and makes individualized recommendations, along with a customized selection of educational handouts. A staff report also is generated and entered automatically into the veteran's electronic medical record.

After reviewing these reports, primary care staff assist patients in setting one to three specific goals for nutritional, physical activity, or behavioral change. All MOVE! program participants receive a pedometer or wheelchair odometer to help them monitor their physical activity. Patient follow-up may be conducted on an individual basis (usually by telephone) or through group sessions. Some patients are referred for specialty consultations, and those who require more intensive interventions may be offered weight loss medications, brief residential treatment, or bariatric surgery, as available and appropriate.

In 2006, the VA mandated that all of its health care facilities implement MOVE! unless alternative weight management programs were already in place.² To date, over 80,000 veterans have participated in MOVE! in over 375,000 patient encounters. And the program continues to evolve. Following the release of the VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines for the

Identification and Management of Overweight and Obesity in 2006,³ MOVE! support and training materials were revised to identify slight variations between the original MOVE! recommendations and the new guidelines. A forthcoming toolkit to accompany the guidelines will feature many of these materials. In addition, innovative methods for providing self-management support (such as the use of home interactive messaging devices to provide daily patient interaction) and new intensive medical treatments for obesity are being developed.

The initial success of MOVE! has prompted its creators to extend the program's reach. HealthierUS Veterans (<http://www.healthierusveterans.va.gov>), a collaboration between the VA and the HHS to prevent obesity and diabetes, promotes MOVE! to non-VHA-enrolled veterans and encourages partnerships between VA facilities and community organizations to help veterans and their families engage in healthy lifestyle behaviors. The program also has been adapted into MOVEmployee!, which assists VA employees in managing their weight. Furthermore, the DoD Nutrition Committee's Weight Management and Education Workgroup has endorsed MOVE! for implementation in some DoD medical treatment facilities.

With both VA and DoD clinicians providing evidence-based treatment strategies for overweight and obesity, military personnel and veterans alike are poised to receive the best assistance available to achieve a healthy weight and lifelong fitness. And these efforts may go a long way toward curbing the obesity epidemic and keeping such

Dr. Jones is the program manager for the VA Managing Overweight/Obesity for Veterans Everywhere (MOVE!) program, which is administered by the VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Durham, NC.

Continued from page 8

chronic diseases as cardiovascular disease and diabetes at bay. ●

Author disclosures

Dr. Jones reports no actual or potential conflicts of interest with regard to this editorial.

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the sponsors, Federal Practitioner, Quadrant HealthCom Inc.,

the U.S. government, or any of its agencies. Please review complete prescribing information for specific drugs or drug combinations—including indications, contraindications, warnings, and adverse effects—before administering pharmacologic therapy to patients.

REFERENCES

1. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Obesity Education Initiative. *Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults: The Evidence Report*. Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; September 1998. NIH Publication No. 98-4083. http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/ob_gdlns.pdf. Accessed December 27, 2007.
2. Veterans Health Administration. *Managing Overweight and/or Obesity for Veterans Everywhere (MOVE!) Program*. Washington, DC: Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration; March 27, 2006. VHA Handbook 1101.1. http://www.move.va.gov/download/Resources/1101.1HK3_27_06.pdf. Accessed January 3, 2008.
3. VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline for Management of Overweight and Obesity. Washington, DC: VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline Working Group, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs and Health Affairs, Department of Defense; December 2006. Office of Quality and Performance publication 10Q-CPG/Obesity-06. http://www.oqp.med.va.gov/cpg/OBE/OBE_base.htm. Accessed December 27, 2007.