

CARES COMMISSION
POST HEARING SUMMARY

VISN 22 Long Beach Hearing
September 29, 2003

- I. Commissioners in Attendance
 - a. John Vogel, Vice Chairman and Hearing Chair
 - b. John Kendall, M.D.
 - c. Richard McCormick, PhD.
 - d. Robert Ray

- II. Market Areas Addressed in Hearing
 - a. California Market

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III. Market Area Summary

Market	Planning Initiative	Market Plan Recommendation	DNCP Recommendation
California	Outpatient Primary Care 2012 – 71% (499K stops) 2022 – 36% (269K stops)	New construction initiatives West LA , Long Beach and Loma Linda.	Expansion of existing CBOCs via clinical service contracts, replacement leases, and new construction/reconfiguration of space at VAMCs.
California	Outpatient Specialty Care 2012 – 79% (534K stops) 2022 – 54% 367K stops)	New construction initiatives West LA , Long Beach and Loma Linda.	Expansion of existing CBOCs via clinical service contracts, replacement leases, and new construction /reconfiguration of space at VAMCs.
California	Inpatient Medicine Increase Workload 2012 – 90 beds (33%) 2022 – 12 beds (4%)	Reactivate inpatient beds and outplace other functions to new clinical addition.	DOD/VA federal sharing, conversion of vacant space and renovation of existing space, contracting. Use community contracting to meet peak demand in 2004 – 2012.
California	Inpatient Psychiatry Decrease Workload 2012 – 26 beds 2022 – 74 beds	Restructure program to enhance outpatient services.	Decreased demand met by downsizing all market psych beds FY2012 – 2022.
California	Proximity and Campus Realignment – Long Beach/Greater LA	Maintain current facilities for acute and tertiary care.	Two facilities will continue to refer patients for interventional cardiology/cardiac surgery and neurosurgery, and collaborate on laboratory, radiation therapy and radiology. Further consolidation anticipated with Geriatrics, Extended Care, Mental Health.
California	Special Disabilities – Blind Rehab and SCI	Build 24 bed Blind Rehab unit at Long Beach, Convert 30 SCI acute beds to long term care.	Long Beach - add new 24 bed Blind Rehab Center, convert 30 acute SCI beds to long term SCI beds.
California	Collaboration – NCA VBA DOD – Camp Pendleton	Identified 20 acres in West LA West LA approved for VBA construction DOD opportunities with 29 Palms Marine base, China Lake, Balboa Naval Hospital, Vandenberg AFB	Utilize 20 acres of West LA for columbarium. Construction of new VBA offices on West LA campus. DOD collaborations with Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego and Military Treatment Facilities in S. California.

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California	Extended Care	West LA – replace 130K sq ft, state has approved 500 bed LTC facility on VA campus, renovate 79K sq ft at Long Beach and San Diego.	Renovation of 80K sq ft in Long Beach and San Diego, replace 130K sq ft in West LA.
California	Research	Enhanced use research needs identified for Loma Linda, San Diego, West LA.	New construction: Loma Linda – 45K sq ft San Diego – 260K sq ft West LA – 245K sq ft Demolish existing space in West LA and backfill in San Diego and Loma Linda.
California	Seismic	5 projects identified with authorization to proceed: 2 at Long Beach and 3 at West LA. Plan includes 3 additional seismic projects.	Construction and demolition of old buildings at West LA and Long Beach, and renovation at San Diego, Long Beach and West LA. Estimated costs: San Diego -\$49M West LA - \$64M Long Beach - \$39M
California	Other	Campus land use issues for state home, VBA, veterans parkway, center for ulcer research, Wadsworth Chapel, YMCA, golf course, 400 senior housing units.	Excess Land Use Policy – process developed to address excess land. Upon review by CARES Commission and approval by Secretary of VA the Land Use Planning process will guide local VA leadership when recommending re-use initiatives to the Secretary.

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IV. Brief Description of Hearing Testimony

a. Elected Officials

Mr. Jack Weiss, Councilman, City of Los Angeles

Ms. Cindy Miscikowski, Councilwoman, 11th District, City of Los Angeles

Mr. Zev Yaroslavsky, Los Angeles County Supervisor

Although they generally support the VA plan each official expressed concern about VISN 22's process for determining use of "excess lands". They also asked interested supporters to stand so Commissioners could recognize the many people from West LA attending the hearing. They urged Commissioners to ensure compliance with the Cranston Act (PL 100 -32). Officials recommended creation of a new Master Land Use Plan for West LA, and a review process that includes veterans and community representatives in addition to VA administrators.

b. Network Leadership – Ken Clark, Network Director

Mr. Clark presented the CARES plan for the California market, which includes 30 CBOCs and four highly affiliated medical centers with large research programs. Southern California veterans face significant travel barriers due to traffic congestion. The market has projected workload gaps for inpatient medicine and outpatient care. Although he mentioned increased enrollment and utilization, Commissioners noted for the record that this market has a projected decrease in enrollment and a projected increase in utilization.

An estimated \$247M is needed for seismic retrofitting of key buildings. Priorities are the main hospitals - West LA (Bldg. 500) and San Diego (Bldg. 1). The plan includes expansion of existing CBOCs, clinical additions in West LA and Loma Linda, creation of a 24 bed Blind Rehabilitation Center, conversion of 30 SCI beds to long term care SCI beds, and renovation of current nursing home units. No new CBOCs are proposed. Over \$100M for expanded research facilities is also included in the plan. Finally, VISN 22 has developed an Excess Land Use Policy to guide their recommendations to the Secretary.

c. Medical Affiliates

Dr. Thomas Cesario, Dean, UCI College of Medicine

Dr. Roger Hadley, Dean, Loma Linda School of Medicine

Mr. Doug Robinson, Vice President, California State University Long Beach (CSLB)

Representatives from each of the medical affiliates talked about the importance of the VA to their education and research missions. CBOCs are not a teaching site for any affiliates, but they recognize their potential value. CSLB is developing an accelerated BSN program to help with their nursing shortage. Commissioners encouraged them to work with the VA on a creative response to this important issue.

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d. Veterans Organizations

Mr. Earl Ivie, Blinded Veterans Association (BVA)
Mr. Al Pavich, Vietnam Veterans of America
Mr. William Rollins, Paralyzed Veterans of America
Mr. Terry Tracy, The American Legion
Mr. Douglas Willey, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Mr. Dan Contreras, Disabled American Veterans
Mr. Jerry Yamamoto, Vietnam Veterans of America
Mr. Stephen Peck, Director for Villages at Cabrillo

Mr. Pavich talked about putting homeless and elderly veterans first, and the need for more mental health and substance abuse services. Mr. Ivie felt BVA was excluded from the BRC site selection process. Given West LA's strong outpatient team he does not want to see those resources squandered. Mr. Willey was concerned about maintaining the statutory number of long term care beds, and seismic retrofitting at Long Beach and West LA. Mr. Rollins supported adding long term care SCI beds but warned about sacrificing current capacity. Mr. Contreras was concerned about divestment of vacant space and felt commercial sales should not be an option. Mr. Tracy said too much consolidation could lead to facility closure and was concerned about a shrinking West LA campus. Mr. Yamamoto questioned the disposition of excess land, and loss of staff from community contracting. He cautioned against abandoning PTSD and Substance Abuse programs.

Finally, Mr. Peck talked about the facilities at Long Beach and West LA for over 900 formerly homeless veterans. This nationally recognized program grew out of a joint venture in the mid-90's involving multiple community partners. With support from VA leaders like Mr. Clark, and broad community involvement, this model can be replicated elsewhere. When asked if homeless facilities should be on a VA campus he said success is based on establishing a non-bureaucratic culture more than the location.

When questioned by Commissioners all the representatives said veterans organizations should be involved in the Excess Land Use Policy and review process. One person stated they are the watchdogs looking after the needs of veterans, while property owners are like neighbors looking after the interests of their property.

e. Employee Representatives

Dr. Sandra Lee, AFGE Local 2297
Ms. Betty Terry, AFGE Local 3943
Ms. Judith Maxwell, United Nurses Association of California
Ms. Donna Soroczak, NOVA (Long Beach)

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Dr. Lee expressed concerns about converting from VA-staffed to contract CBOCs, which often abandon difficult patients and have long delays for follow up appointments. Ms. Terry was also concerned about the quality of care at contract CBOCs that are understaffed and insensitive to the needs of veterans. Ms. Soroczak felt it was appropriate to redirect resources from inpatient to outpatient facilities, but discussed extending nursing salary grades and steps to be competitive. Ms. Maxwell supported nursing involvement.

f. Community Partners

Col. Joseph Smith, County of Los Angeles Department of Veterans Affairs

Mr. Stewart Liff, VBA Regional Office

Mr. William Manes, Orange County Veterans Advisory Council

Ms. Toni Reinis, New Direction

Col. Smith was concerned long term care, mental health, and domiciliary programs are insufficient for veteran needs. More successful CBOCs are needed. Excess land information is vague and incomplete. Mr. Liff said VBA supports co-location at West LA. Mr. Manes wanted to see more Orange County CBOCs and transportation between CBOCs and VAMCs. Ms. Reinis talked about New Direction programs for homeless veterans and the critical need for veteran senior housing and special needs. They are looking at housing for the Sepulveda and West LA campuses.

g. Land Use Interest

Ms. Catherine Barrier, Los Angeles Conservancy

Ms. Flora Gill-Krisiloff, Brentwood Community Council

Ms. Susan Young, Veterans Park Conservancy

Mr. Jay Handel, West LA Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Leonard McRoskey, Westwood Property Owners Association

Ms. Barrier said the VA plan threatened historic resources in West LA, and advocated preparation of a comprehensive long term master land plan. Ms. Young spoke of her organization's fourteen year history of funding restoration at the West LA campus. They feel excess land should be used for veterans, stay under federal ownership, and be maintained as open spaces. She also recommended development of a land use master plan. Ms. Gill-Krisiloff was involved in developing the previous master land plan, which she characterized as severely flawed. She wants veteran and community stakeholders involved in the land use policy. Mr. Handel reaffirmed the Cranston Act and cited Secretary Principi's previous discussions with community representatives. Mr. McRoskey said a master plan was no panacea and suggested a constitutional document to protect West LA.

Statements were also submitted from Congressman Henry Waxman, California Senator Sheila James Kuehl, and California Assemblyman Paul Karetz.

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V. Commissioner Views

Market	Planning Initiative	DNCP Recommendation	Commissioner Views
California	Outpatient Primary Care 2012 – 71% (499K stops) 2022 – 36% (269K stops)	Expansion of existing CBOCs via clinical service contracts, replacement leases, and new construction/reconfiguration of space at VAMCs.	Commissioners agreed with plans to expand services at existing CBOCs. They support VAMC clinical additions to free up space for outpatient care. They noted and were concerned mental health care was not available at any of the contract CBOCs, forcing high priority patients to travel to VAMCs for care.
California	Outpatient Specialty Care 2012 – 79% (534K stops) 2022 – 54% 367K stops)	Expansion of existing CBOCs via clinical service contracts, replacement leases, and new construction /reconfiguration of space at VAMCs.	Commissioners agreed with plans to expand services at existing CBOCs. They support VAMC clinical additions to free up space for outpatient care.
California	Inpatient Medicine Increase Workload 2012 – 90 beds (33%) 2022 – 12 beds (4%)	DOD/VA federal sharing, conversion of vacant space and renovation of existing space, contracting. Use community contracting to meet peak demand in 2004 – 2012.	Commissioners agreed with plans for clinical additions and expansion of beds. They were confident the network would monitor and respond to bed needs based on utilization.
California	Inpatient Psychiatry Decrease Workload 2012 – 26 beds 2022 – 74 beds	Decreased demand met by downsizing all market psych beds FY2012 – 2022.	Commissioners agreed with the plan to manage bed reduction based on actual utilization. They also thought some capacity changes might be linked to longer length of stay at facilities with psychiatric research programs.
California	Proximity and Campus Realignment – Long Beach/Greater LA	Facilities will continue to refer patients for interventional cardiology/cardiac surgery and neurosurgery, and collaborate on laboratory, radiation therapy and radiology. Further consolidation anticipated in Geriatrics, Extended Care, Mental Health.	Commissioners support continuation of existing facilities and integration of services where appropriate. Based on the Network Director's testimony they would expect to see further consolidation of mental health and extended care leadership.
California	Special Disabilities – Blind Rehab and SCI	Long Beach - add new 24 bed Blind Rehab Center (BRC), convert 30 acute SCI beds to long term SCI beds.	Blind Rehab - Commissioners agreed with veteran representatives who expressed appreciation and recognition of the need for a BRC in Southern California to reduce excessive travel and waiting times. While the BVA representative expressed a preference for West LA, Commissioners thought the

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			network should use its best judgment on the location. SCI – Commissioners support converting 30 SCI beds to long term care but asked for clarification on the difference in patient profiles between SCI and long term care beds.
California	Collaboration – NCA VBA DOD – Camp Pendleton	Utilize 20 acres of West LA for columbarium. Construction of new VBA offices on West LA campus. DOD collaborations with Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego and Military Treatment Facilities in S. California.	Commissioners support utilizing 20 acres for a columbarium and co-locating the VBA office to West LA. Commissioners encourage DOD collaboration but felt the plan lacked sufficient detail for comment.
California	Extended Care	Renovation of 80K sq ft in Long Beach and San Diego, replace 130K sq ft in West LA.	Commissioners concur with plans to renovate the nursing home units after confirming there would be no reduction from the current bed level.
California	Research	New construction: Loma Linda – 45K sq ft San Diego – 260K sq ft West LA – 245K sq ft Demolish existing space in West LA and backfill in San Diego and Loma Linda.	Commissioners agreed with plans for new research facilities.
California	Seismic	Construction and demolition of old buildings at West LA and Long Beach, and renovation at San Diego, Long Beach and West LA. Estimated costs: San Diego -\$49M, West LA - \$64M, Long Beach - \$39M.	Commissioners agreed with the need to seismic retrofit high risk facilities.
California	ther	Excess Land Use Policy – Process developed to address excess land. Upon review by CARES Commission and approval by Secretary of VA the Land Use Planning process will guide local VA leadership when recommending re-use initiatives to the Secretary.	Commissioners understand veteran organizations and community groups want pre-decisional input on the use of land at the West LA campus. Commissioners had concerns about limiting the review group to only six network administrators. They recommend including veteran organizations and community groups in the process of discussing land use recommendations, although the final decision should be made by the agency.

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VI. Other Comments

- After hearing extensive testimony on West LA homeless initiatives going back to the mid-90's, and the New Direction program, Commissioners commend VISN 22 leaders for working with community partners to put some of its land to good use. This network is a model for working with homeless veterans in a thoughtful, incremental manner. Commissioners also commend the communities around West LA for supporting veteran programs. The absence of a “not in my back yard” attitude was evident in the testimony and participation at the hearing. Commissioners were gratified to hear first hand about programs for veterans truly in need of help.
- Commissioners were concerned about the lack of a uniform practice or policy for providing mental health services at contract CBOCs. They believe VA is administering a national benefit plan that should be uniform and consistent.

VII. Follow-up questions for VHA/VISN

1. Commissioners recommend a national review of VA-staff vs. contract CBOCs on selected measures (e.g., patient satisfaction, scope of service, quality, sensitivity to veterans issues, mental health referrals) to refine operational and contractual goals.
2. Commissioners requested clarification on the difference in patient profiles and staffing needs for SCI and long term care SCI patients.