

VA Medical Innovations and Discoveries

Summary Fact Sheet compiled by the
Association of VA Psychologist Leaders

Over the past 70 years, VA researchers and clinicians have worked together, along with scientists at major academic institutions, to develop innovative treatments that have benefited not only the nation's veterans, but also patients throughout the country and the world. Because the VA has a stable population that it follows over the long-term, and advanced information sharing technology, researchers are able to make breakthroughs that would be less feasible if veterans' care became scattered across the private sector. Among the many things VA researchers invented or developed are:

- Therapies for tuberculosis following World War II
- The implantable cardiac pacemaker
- Computerized Axial Tomography (CAT) scans
- The nicotine patch to help smokers quit
- The first successful liver transplants
- A vaccine for shingles
- Functional electrical stimulation systems that allow patients to move paralyzed limbs
- Prosthetics technology to help restore the sense of touch for those who have lost an upper limb and use an artificial hand
- The first powered ankle-foot prosthesis
- A computer system that provides patients on ventilators more accurate respirator settings with fewer medical complications
- Therapy with electrodes implanted into the brain to control tremors and movement problems in patients with Parkinson's disease

VA researchers also found that:

- Low dose aspirin regimen can prevent heart attacks in patients with unstable angina
- Prazosin can improve sleep and lessen nightmares for those with PTSD
- Antioxidant lutein could help prevent macular degeneration as well as reverse symptoms
- Drug treatment is effective in controlling blood pressure and reducing the incidence of major cardiovascular events

Three VA researchers have received Nobel Prizes in Physiology/Medicine, and seven have received Lasker Awards.

Excerpted from

<http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/12678/va-research-breakthroughs-and-discoveries-improve-the-lives-of-veterans-and-more/>
&
<http://www.research.va.gov/about/history.cfm>

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