



Service to Fit the Need: a Concierge Model of Veterans Healthcare

We believe HeroCare Connect™ is a “first-in-the-nation” collaborative effort between two hospitals (Deborah Heart and Lung Center and Cooper University Health Care) to provide specialty medical services to active military and families, military retirees, and activated National Guardsmen associated with the Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, as well as Veterans across southern New Jersey. The JMG Group LLC was engaged by the hospitals at the outset to provide analytical and consulting work, and has been engaged to provide ongoing assistance with this successful project.

The initiative utilizes a concierge model that offers *initial appointments within 24-48 hours obtained through a single phone call* to 866-9HEROCARE. VA-eligible Veterans utilizing the VA's Choice program and all those who have served and receive their care from community-based care providers are equally welcome to use the services of HeroCare Connect to quickly locate and schedule the care they need, close to where they live and work.

The hub of HeroCare Connect™ is a Patient Service Center on the Deborah Campus staffed by “navigators” with deep experience in the military who provide one-stop scheduling for patients requiring specialty care not offered by the 87th Medical Group, which is the primary care practice operating on the Joint Base serving more than 32,000 people.

HeroCare Connect™ navigators track each patient's progress and provide continuing assistance to them through the course of their care journey. Care is delivered by either Deborah or Cooper affiliated providers throughout the region based on the patient's medical needs, location, and convenience.

If the patient needs services that neither Deborah nor Cooper provide, the navigators at the Patient Service Center will find another community provider.

The JMG Group provided leadership for Deborah and Cooper in the development and launch of the HeroCare Connect program. Using internal data, Deborah sought an analysis of the healthcare needs of active military, dependents, retirees, and Veterans within its service area.

The JMG Group's partners have over 30 years of collective healthcare leadership and management experience. Their expertise and knowledge of the regional market was essential in gaining a clear understanding of the healthcare needs of a population including more than 45,000 TRICARE beneficiaries and 176,000 Veterans residing in Deborah's and Cooper's six-county service area.

DELIVERING THE RIGHT LEVEL OF CARE

A Veteran with a lung condition wasn't improving. He called HeroCare Connect™ to schedule care through the Veterans' Choice program.

He was immediately scheduled to see a Pulmonologist at the Deborah Heart and Lung Center. However, the Veteran couldn't be treated at Deborah because he needed a procedure that Deborah does not perform.

HeroCare Connect™ called to follow-up and scheduled him to see a pulmonologist at Cooper University Healthcare within a few days. The Veteran had two surgeries within a week of his first visit to Cooper.

In scheduling the surgical appointments, the HeroCare Connect™ navigator remained on the phone with the Veteran and the Choice program to ensure that authorizations were in place.

In a follow up call during his recovery, the Veteran told HeroCare Connect™ that he is feeling much better. Just as important, he said he had never been treated so well.

Building a System of Veterans' Community Care Networks

HeroCare Connect™ operates on a “concierge” model, in which patients are assisted in obtaining a solution tailored to their needs. A *knowledgeable Patient Care Center navigator* assists Veterans, active military, dependents, and retirees in establishing eligibility, obtaining authorizations, and scheduling care in convenient locations. This prevents confusion and alleviates hardship for patients, allowing them to focus on their health rather than managing mountains of paper and an impersonal bureaucracy.

It also *eases the administrative burden on the VA, TPAs, and health care providers*. Responsive to the Veteran, the VHA clinician, the non-VA provider, and the Third Party Administrators, this type of system provides a simple integrating mechanism to bring together system knowledge and capability to act swiftly and meet stakeholder needs. HeroCare Connect™ also assists in program oversight, through follow up contact that walks participants through a satisfaction survey.

In developing and implementing HeroCare Connect™ with Deborah and Cooper, JMG also worked with Health Net to improve and sustain effective collaboration and communication between all stakeholders. The results are increased access and reduced wait times for Veteran and TRICARE patients, better administration and billing, and increased satisfaction.



New Jersey Governor Chris Christie speaking about HeroCare Connect™: “[I]t is critical for our veterans to have access to medical care when they need it. We need them to be...collaborators in their own healthcare...and to get that healthcare...as quickly as possible so that the healing process can begin. *That’s what HeroCare Connect™ is going to help to do.*”

DELIVERING THE RIGHT TYPE OF CARE

At the end of April 2017, a Veteran reached out to HeroCare Connect™ to see if he could get care under the Veterans Choice program. He told the navigator he had “been waiting a long time to schedule this appointment”. The VA had scheduled him with an ENT, but it was the wrong specialty, wasting the time of both the Veteran and the clinician.

HeroCare Connect™ navigators scheduled him with an appointment in the right specialty within a few days. They are now following up with him to ensure that his care was satisfactory, and to see what follow on actions are required.

