

## The VA and Academic Medicine: Partners in Health Care, Training, and Research

Since the end of World War II, the nation's medical schools and teaching hospitals have partnered with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to train physicians, advance research, and provide high-quality care to veterans. In the post-war era, facing a critical physician shortage and millions of returning service members in need of lifelong care, the VA established affiliations with academic institutions under VA Policy Memorandum No. 2, making VA facilities an integral part of residency training.

Today, this partnership remains strong. As the largest single provider of health care training in the United States, 70% of physicians rotate through the VA for some portion of their training, and many medical school faculty members also provide care at these centers. What began as a post-war solution has evolved into an unprecedented public-private collaboration, grounded in shared missions of medical education, patient care, and research.

### Medical Education

The VA's long-standing partnerships with medical schools and teaching hospitals ensure that future health care professionals gain essential clinical experience. Through these affiliations, in academic year (AY) 2023-2024<sup>i</sup>, 95% of the nation's medical schools are affiliated with the VA, and the VA helps fund approximately 10% of graduate medical education trainee positions.



The following future health care professionals conducted some or all of their training at a VA medical facility in AY 2023-2024:

- 51,000+ or over 32% of all physician residents
- Nearly 30,000 medical students
- 122,000+ health professions trainees in total

### Clinical Care

Close VA collaborations with academic medical centers, including 70% of VA physicians holding faculty appointments at U.S. medical schools, enhance the VA's ability to provide specialized, high-quality care to veterans. Additionally, these partnerships expand access to both hospital-based and community-based care. As of FY 2023, community care accounted for nearly 30% of the VA's total care obligations, serving 2.8 million veterans — more than double the number served in 2014<sup>iii</sup> — through support from academic health systems and teaching hospitals.

In FY 2023, AAMC-member VA hospitals accounted for an estimated<sup>ii</sup>:

- 150,000+ admissions
- Nearly 1.6 million total inpatient days
- Nearly 500,000 emergency visits
- 100,000+ surgeries performed



### Research

VA-funded research drives innovation in veteran health, tackling pressing challenges, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury, prosthetics, and cancer, among other conditions. Through partnerships with medical schools and research institutions, many of which include joint appointments for VA researchers, the VA advances discoveries that benefit veterans and all patients nationwide.<sup>iv</sup>



Recent and notable studies include:

- A VA-developed [drug that protects the blood-brain barrier](#) to prevent cognitive decline from traumatic brain injury and Alzheimer's.
- A VA, academic, and industry research team created a [precision risk screening tool](#) for prostate cancer that is now being tested in a randomized clinical trial.
- The [Million Veteran Program](#), which was launched in 2011 to collect data on genetics, lifestyle, and health, recently enrolled its one millionth Veteran. To date, MVP data has been used in more than 350 peer-reviewed research publications about a wide range of health conditions, including cancer, diabetes, PTSD, suicide prevention, Alzheimer's disease, cardiovascular diseases, kidney disease, and more.