

PROGRAM

FROM B1

VA puts more care under primary doctor

Jain said the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center and 13 of its outpatient clinics in Northeast Ohio are adopting the new program.

The Cleveland VA operation has been given \$1.2 million to date to begin the pilot and expansion of the program, with additional funding coming in the fall.

Jain credited the Cleveland area as having the “most evolved model” in the pilot and thus being well-positioned for the expansion.

Under the plan, patients at the VA outpatient clinics in Northeast Ohio will be able to choose a new way to obtain the opinion of a specialist.

“If the patient agrees to a SCAN-ECHO consult, then the primary-care provider will discuss the patient’s case with the specialist and pass the information on to the patient at the next visit,” said Jain. “If a patient wants a face-to-face consult, then the primary-care provider will refer them for the standard consult.”

The VA is the largest integrated health care system in the nation, serving 6 million veterans, with the expectation of 1 million more entering the system in the next year.

The program will allow primary-care providers and specialists to become partners in the long-term care of patients, said Jain.

When primary-care providers arrange a teleconsultation with a specialist, other physicians will participate in the call.

“What happens is we learn from each other’s example. When you’re discussing your

patient, someone else is learning too,” said Jain.

He said the model reminds him of medical school, where as a resident he learned to present patients’ cases to a group of his peers and, in turn, he learned from others’ expertise.

He hopes the program will attract more primary-care physicians.

“There are many physicians who are not electing to go into primary care for multiple reasons, but one of the reasons is that they feel they’re not being challenged enough,” said Jain. “I’m hoping for more-satisfied primary-care providers who will want to stay practicing primary care in the VA.”

Dr. Susan Kirsh, a general internist and primary-care provider for the Cleveland VA, said, “I think primary-care providers feel very empowered about the new knowledge and that they can take leading roles on specialties and become a mini-expert in their local clinic.”

Jain said the program will provide more-efficient and cost-effective care with expected savings from using specialists at the VA, not referring patients to private physicians and not having to reimburse veterans for travel to a specialist.

“We’re trying to leverage some savings over time, but we are worried about patient care and safety more than financing,” said Jain.

Dr. Jose Ortiz, Cleveland VA cardiac team leader, said that if the VA can, for example, keep heart patients stable “and in the care of their primary-care providers, not only are we saving a substantial amount of dollars, but we are giving better care to patients and providing better outcomes.”

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DORAL CHENOWETH III | THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

This aerial photograph shows the train that derailed Wednesday near the Ohio State Fairgrounds in Columbus. Part of the freight train carrying ethanol caught fire, shooting flames skyward into the darkness and prompting the evacuation of a mile-wide area.

TRAIN

FROM B1

Derailment, blast hit Columbus

The derailment occurred on a curve on the Norfolk Southern track just west of Fields Avenue and south of East 11th Avenue. Norfolk Southern said 16 of the train’s 98 cars derailed. The engineer wasn’t injured and was able to uncouple the front section of the train from the burning cars.

Assistant Chief Dave Whiting

of the Columbus Fire Division said three of the cars that derailed were tankers that each carried 30,000 gallons of ethanol. Those were the cars that were primarily involved in the explosion and fire. The other derailed cars were carrying corn syrup and grain, Whiting said.

The train also had several cars that contain styrene, a dangerous chemical, but those cars were not involved in the derailment, Whiting said.

When firefighters arrived at the scene, they heard a loud hissing that told them there was a risk of explosion, Whiting said.

They and police backed out of the immediate area and began knocking on doors of homes they felt were at risk.

“Those rail cars can fly a mile,” Whiting said.

The explosion occurred soon afterward and “created a huge fireball,” Whiting said. Witnesses reported seeing the flames for miles.

Nicholas Goodrich, 35, said he and some friends ran up on the tracks after hearing the derailment.

“The heat was so intense it was suffocating,” he said. “It felt like it was 400 degrees. The heat was

shaking me, like wind was blowing.”

Whiting and Mayor Michael B. Coleman said it was fortunate that the derailment occurred in an area of the city with few people around at that time of day. The nearby fairgrounds and commercial areas were closed, and only a small residential neighborhood was directly affected.

“I’m grateful that this did not occur in a more populated area,” Coleman said.

Dispatch reporter Robert Vitale contributed to this story.

FIRE

FROM B1

Voters to decide who appoints chief

Although Timothy O’Toole, a 31-year veteran of the Fire Department, is serving as interim chief, the permanent position remains up for grabs since former Chief Paul Stubbs retired earlier this year.

The mayor hopes the appointments will deepen the sense of accountability among department brass, who until now have failed to adequately supervise their charges, Flask said.

After a series of city auditors identified numerous payroll abuses in the Fire Department, a special investigator last month recommended the city pursue criminal charges against five firefighters who, according to his investigation, had been illegally paying colleagues to work their shifts while continuing to collect salaries and benefits.

The five firefighters, and an additional firefighter, who in April

pleaded guilty to the charges in Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court, represent the most serious of the abuses.

In the past year, city auditors discovered that 518 of the nearly 800 firefighters either failed to repay or were owed traded hours between 2006 and 2010.

Forty-seven of them each owed colleagues more than 750 hours.

Meanwhile, more than 300 firefighters were owed time for shift trades more than a year old.

The firefighters union contract permits shift trades but requires they be repaid within a year.

Selling the shifts or accepting money from a colleague to fill in — a practice commonly referred to as “caddying” — is illegal.

At the council hearing Wednesday, firefighters union leaders said they could not see the benefit of appointing the chief when in the past, city officials seemed to approve of Stubbs’ work and absolve him of culpability in the scandal.

Adding supervisors who did not climb the ranks would erode the sense of cohesion in a department in which members must trust one another to survive in the field, said Union President Frank Szabo.

“Firefighters in Cleveland are among the best in the country,” Szabo said. “One reason we’re so proficient is we have a high degree of trust in our officers. It’s cause for concern that we could have a situation where folks were brought on for their administrative skill but could essentially end up commanding a fire scene.”

Several council members questioned the wisdom of spending what could amount to \$500,000 a year in salaries and benefits for three new deputy chiefs without evidence that adding appointed supervisors would quell wrongdoing.

Westbrook pressed Flask to further explain why the chief would be more effective if appointed rather than coming up through the ranks.

Flask steered clear of addressing the performance of past chiefs, including Stubbs, and held tight to his refrain that the city’s priority in the future would be “accountability.”

“There is a certain acknowledgment that you either get the job done and do it right or we get someone else to take your place,” Flask said. “In the past 18 months,

it has become clear that there were many things that could have been done better.”

Councilwoman Dona Brady said appointing the chief and command staff would be unnecessary in light of other changes the city has made to curb payroll abuses, including upgraded time-keeping equipment, a new cap on hours that can be traded or owed and new policies on working secondary jobs or calling off sick.

She accused Flask and administrators of using the ballot issue to impress voters who might be angry about the lack of oversight that led to the problems.

Other council members, including Jeffrey Johnson and Kevin Conwell, said they will campaign in support of the measure in the fall.

“If you want to keep it the same way it is right now, we’re failing the residents,” Conwell said. “Untie the mayor’s hands so he can choose to either pick someone from the ranks or go somewhere else.”

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HAPPENING

Movie ‘Coral Sea’ screened at N. Chagrin park

Enjoy a Friday Movie Night viewing of “Coral Sea” at 7:30 p.m. Friday at the Nature Center in the Cleveland Metroparks’ North Chagrin Reservation.

The movie, narrated by naturalist David Attenborough, will show how coral reefs are formed, how schools of fish stake their territory and more.

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Thursday~Week 28

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BINGO

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