

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans' Use of Veterans Health Administration and Purchased Care Before and After Veterans Choice Program Implementation

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- Disclosures: Authors are researchers employed by VA.

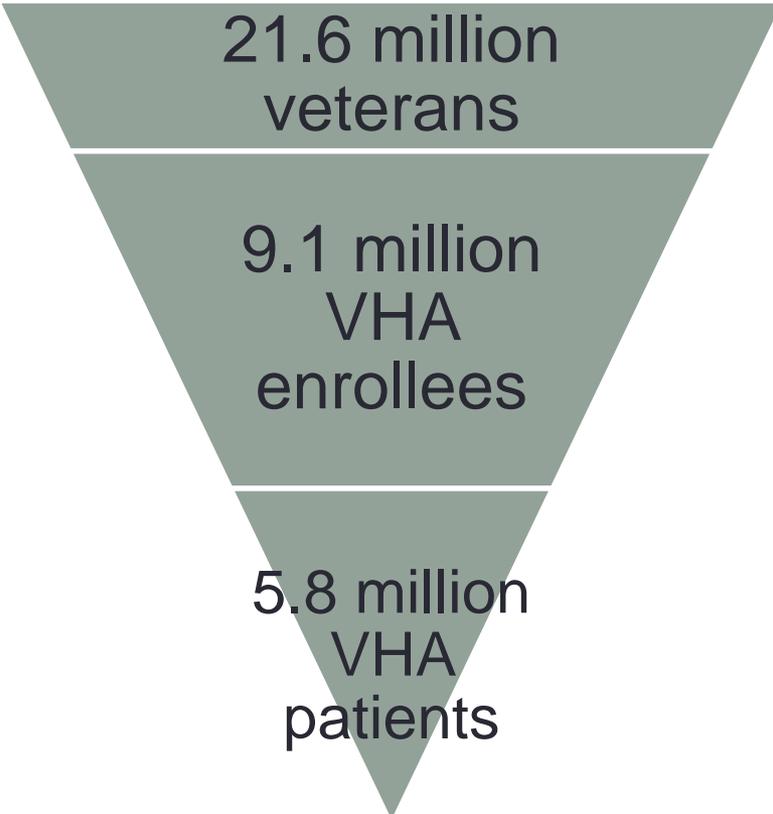
Poll Question

- What is your primary role at VA? Pick the best possible answer.
 - Research
 - Operations
 - Healthcare provider
 - Other

Outline of the Talk

- Background
- Methods
- Results
- Implications
- Q&A

VHA Overview



21.6 million
veterans

9.1 million
VHA
enrollees

5.8 million
VHA
patients

- Largest **integrated** healthcare system in U.S.
- 150 medical centers
- Over 1,400 other facilities
- Global budget of \$59 billion
- On average, patients relied on VHA for **50% of care**

Needs of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans

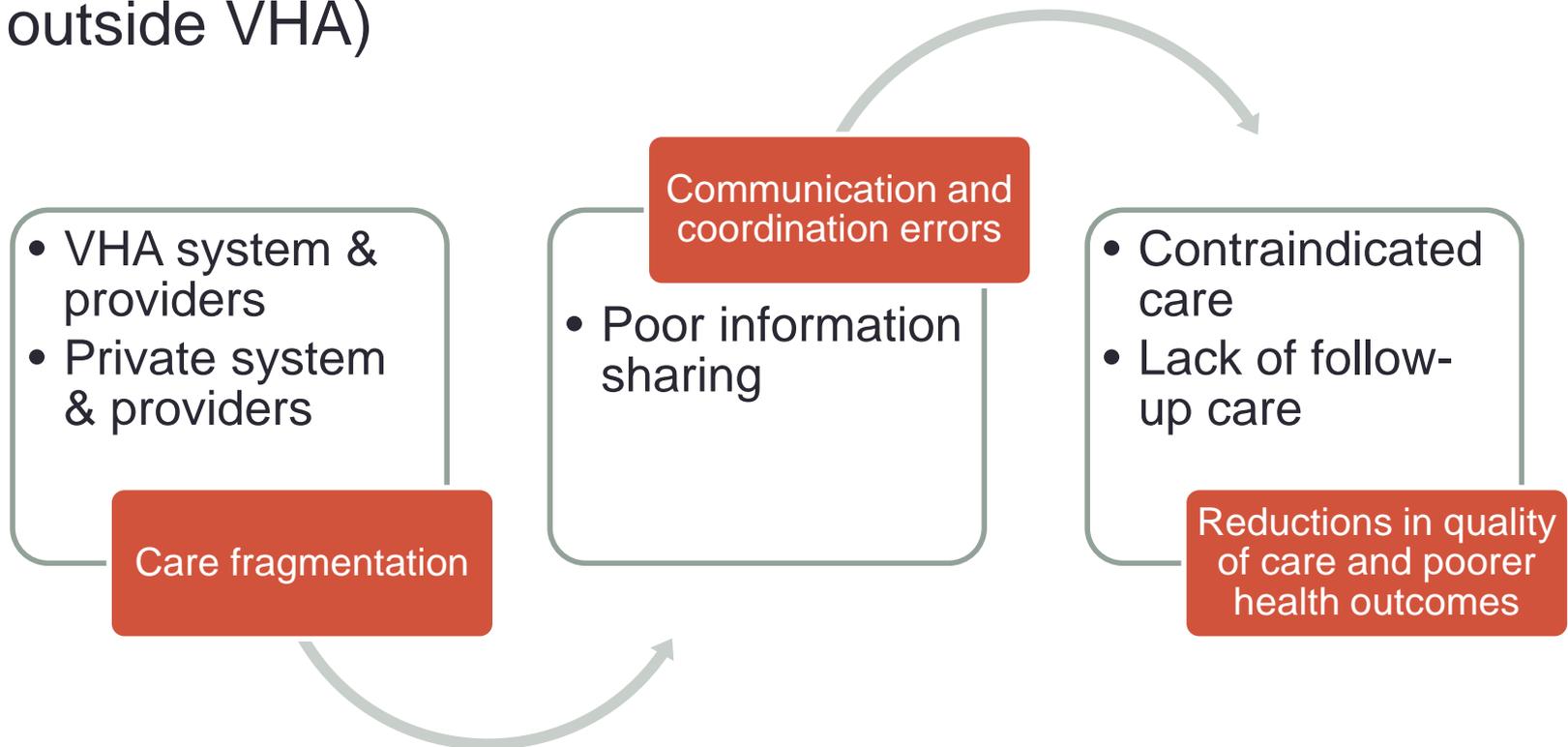
- Over 2 million service members
- Long deployments, frequently redeployed
- Combat survival 97%
- High levels of physical and mental health problems, particularly:
 - Traumatic brain injury (TBI)
 - Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
 - Substance use disorders (SUD)
 - Depression
- VHA low-cost option
- 61% enrolled in and utilized VHA

VCP to Address Access Issues

- Part of Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act (VACAA) of 2014
- Congress allocated **\$10 billion** for VCP for FY2015-17
- Pays for veterans to receive care **outside VHA**
- Eligible if long wait times, large driving distances, and/or particular hardships
 - **Wait-time** qualify for specific services outside VHA
 - **Mileage/hardship** qualify for any services outside VHA
- Small purchased care program (“**traditional Fee**”) existed before

Pros and Cons of VCP

- Broader **access** and **coverage**
- **Care fragmentation** (having providers both inside and outside VHA)



Hypotheses

- **More VCP use by mileage/hardship group** than wait-time group, due to VCP access differences
- **Substitution** of outpatient care – reduction in VHA care after VCP implementation

Sample

2 million Iraq and Afghanistan veterans
OEF/OIF/OND Roster

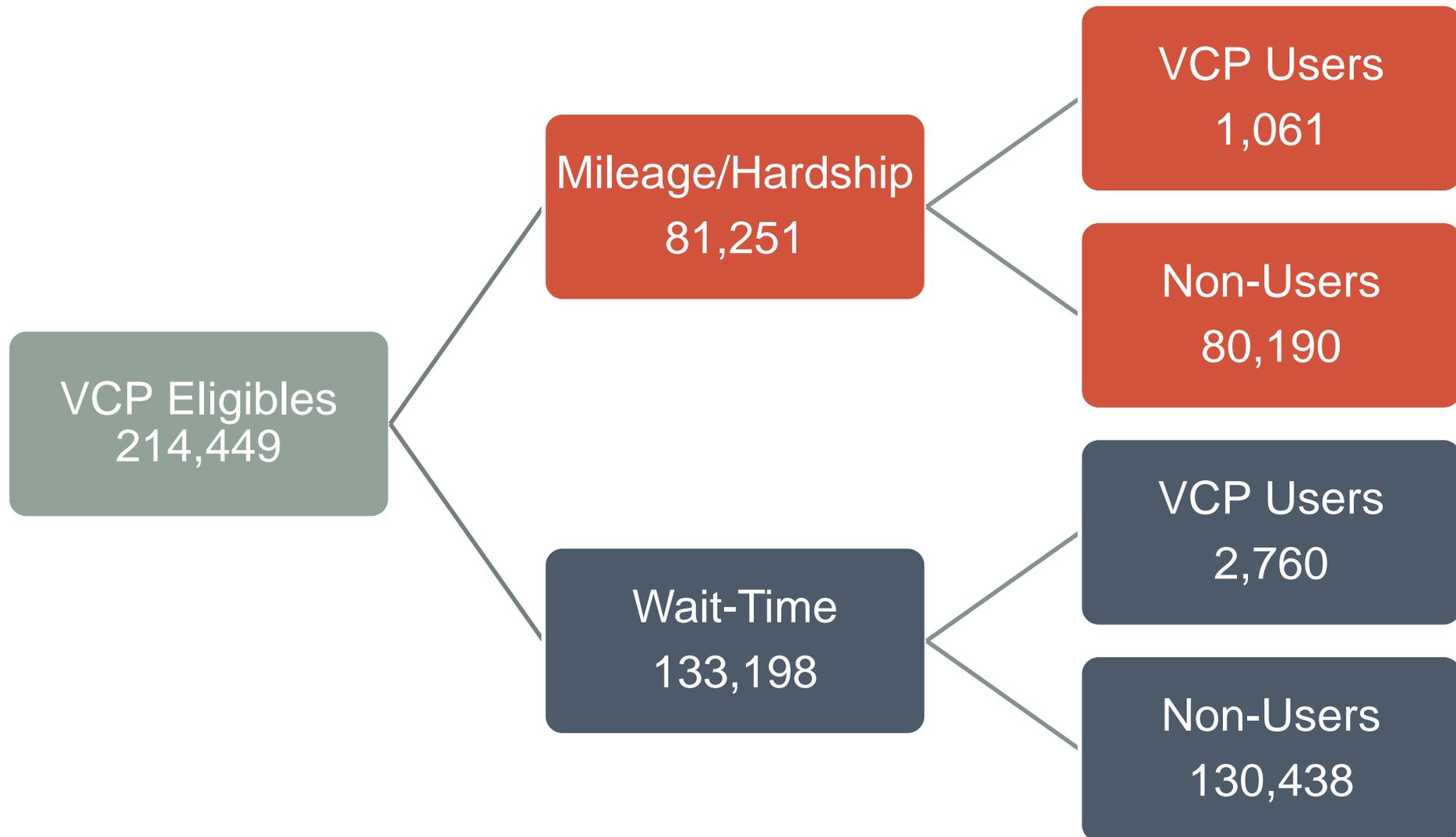
1.5 million VHA enrollees
between FY2012-2015
*Spatient, Corporate Data
Warehouse (CDW)*

**214,449 VCP
eligible**
*VACAA,
CDW*

Key Variables for Descriptive Analyses

Variable(s)	Location in Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW)	Significance
vc_eligibilitycodeid	VACAA.Patients	VCP eligibility groups: wait-time or mileage/hardship
category_of_care	FBCS.outpatientauthorization	Care groups for purchased care
stop & credit	DSS.Out & DSS.Out2	Care groups for VHA care

VCP Users vs. Non-Users, FY2015



Characteristics of VCP Eligibles



Demographic

- Late thirties
- Male
- High school diploma
- White
- Half married



Military

- Army
- Active Duty
- Enlisted
- Half deployed multiple times



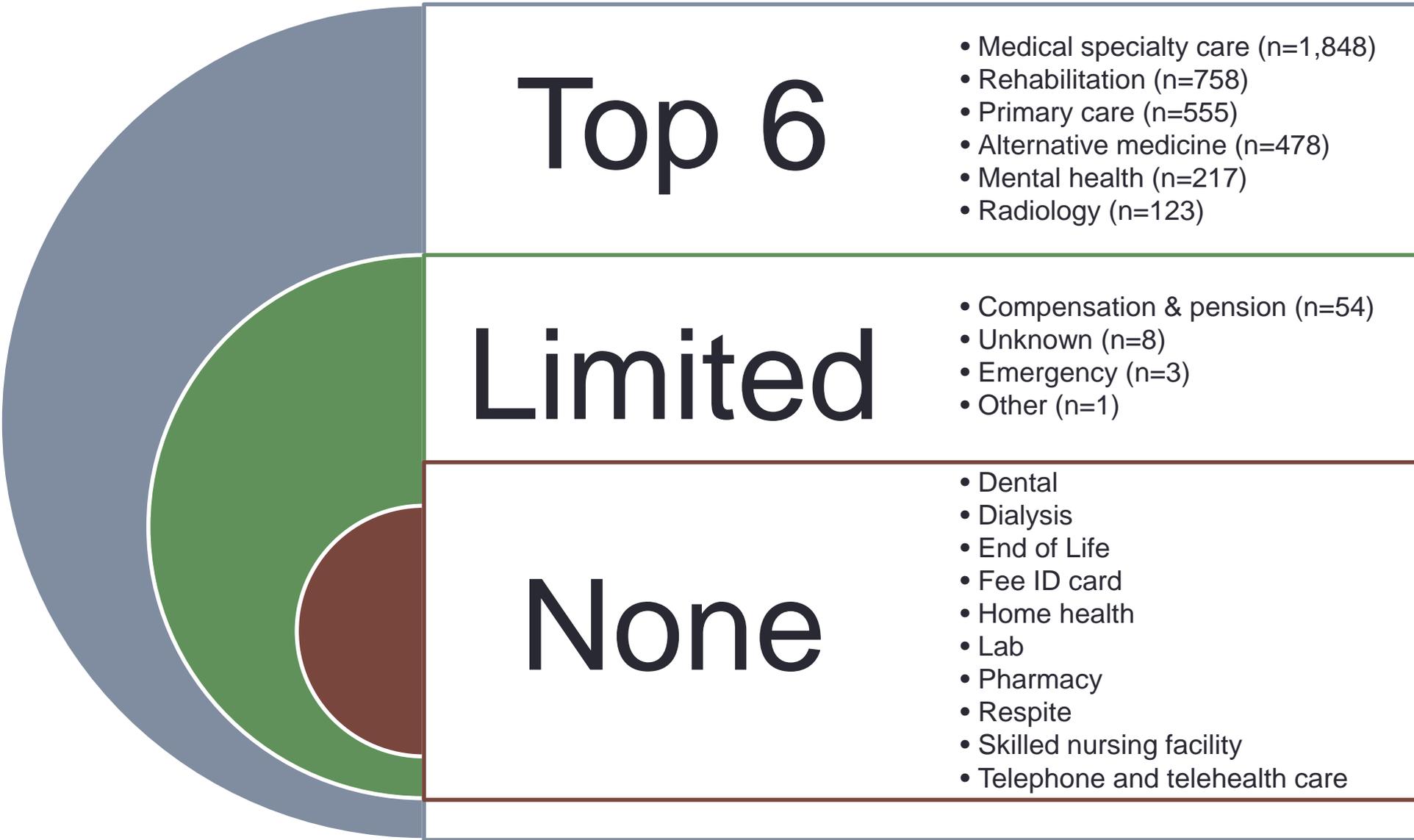
Healthcare Access

- VA priority level 1
- No health insurance
- More rural for mileage/hardship
- > Mean driving distance for mileage/hardship

VCP Eligibles, Users, and Visits, FY2015

- 214,449 VCP eligibles
- 3,821 unique VCP users (2% of eligibles)
- Peak of VCP users (1,078) and visits (2,332) in July

VCP Users by Care Type



Top 6

- Medical specialty care (n=1,848)
- Rehabilitation (n=758)
- Primary care (n=555)
- Alternative medicine (n=478)
- Mental health (n=217)
- Radiology (n=123)

Limited

- Compensation & pension (n=54)
- Unknown (n=8)
- Emergency (n=3)
- Other (n=1)

None

- Dental
- Dialysis
- End of Life
- Fee ID card
- Home health
- Lab
- Pharmacy
- Respite
- Skilled nursing facility
- Telephone and telehealth care

Medical Specialty Care

(visits per capita)

VCP Eligible	Pre-VCP				Post-VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait-time (mean)	4.1	5.0	3.5	4.9	3.4	5.0	1.5	3.4	4.7
n	5,169	50,619	7,539	61,588	11,800	74,786	1,410	14,213	96,489
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	3.3	3.9	3.0	3.7	3.2	3.7	1.5	3.2	3.3
n	2,372	17,273	3,351	19,597	5,020	21,649	438	5,351	22,679

VCP User	Pre-VCP				Post-VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait-time (mean)	2.9	5.4	2.8	6.7	3.5	5.8	1.5	4.5	5.5
n	80	669	114	776	168	935	1,410	209	1152
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	4.1	5.1	3.2	4.9	3.9	5.0	1.5	4.2	3.9
n	32	180	60	222	106	225	438	132	240

Rehabilitation

(visits per capita)

VCP Eligible	Pre-VCP				Post-VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait-time (mean)	8.8	4.6	9.2	4.6	8.7	4.4	5.8	8.8	4.2
n	1,637	17,910	2,116	21,909	3,811	28,348	676	4,993	37,920
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	8.5	4.0	7.7	3.7	8.1	3.5	6.0	8.0	3.3
n	933	4,509	1,030	4,912	1,605	5,420	82	1,803	5,528
VCP User	Pre-VCP				Post-VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait-time (mean)	9.3	4.0	10.4	5.2	9.4	4.5	5.8	8.4	3.6
n	10	107	19	122	51	184	676	81	259
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	9.9	1.9	9.6	2.8	9.3	3.5	6.0	15.3	2.4
n	7	8	7	11	11	21	82	20	20

Primary Care

(visits per capita)

VCP Eligible	Pre-VCP				Post-VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait-time (mean)	3.5	2.9	3.0	2.8	2.1	2.8	1.3	4.1	2.6
n	21	61,056	2	74,040	5	90,885	199	37	115,067
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	1.9	2.3	14.0	2.3	1.3	2.3	1.4	3.9	2.1
n	29	23,184	1	26,433	3	29,961	356	59	31,626

VCP User	Pre-VCP				Post-VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait-time (mean)	-	2.9	-	3.0	-	2.8	1.3	-	2.2
n	-	101	-	109	-	131	199	-	148
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	-	2.6	-	2.7	-	2.4	1.4	-	2.0
n	-	162	-	203	-	219	356	-	195

Alternative Medicine

(visits per capita)

VCP Eligible	Pre-VCP				Post-VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait-time (mean)	9.3	4.7	9.0	4.5	8.8	11.0	6.1	8.7	-
n	672	235	901	344	1,705	1	326	2,592	-
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	7.2	5.3	7.9	4.0	7.5	-	5.0	7.8	-
n	332	40	592	50	887	-	152	1,072	-

VCP User	Pre-VCP				Post-VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait-time (mean)	7.0	8.0	8.6	4.7	8.9	-	6.1	7.5	-
n	7	2	10	7	28	-	326	41	-
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	9.1	-	13.6	-	11.9	-	5.0	12.9	-
n	16	-	20	-	40	-	152	65	-

Mental Health

(visits per capita)

VCP Eligible	Pre-VCP				Post-VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait-time (mean)	13.5	8.7	15.2	8.9	12.4	9.0	3.6	10.6	8.3
n	434	40,268	476	49,794	810	60,941	118	1,427	75,657
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	10.1	7.0	11.6	7.0	12.9	7.1	4.5	10.8	6.4
n	207	13,440	195	15,347	274	17,361	99	499	18,405

VCP User	Pre-VCP				Post-VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait-time (mean)	13.0	10.1	17.0	9.3	10.0	10.2	3.6	15.3	5.8
n	1	34	1	55	3	73	118	19	99
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	6.0	7.3	2.8	9.3	10.9	8.7	4.5	8.5	6.0
n	2	39	4	48	7	53	99	9	58

Radiology

(visits per capita)

VCP Eligible	Pre-VCP				Post-VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait-time (mean)	1.3	2.4	1.3	2.3	1.4	2.4	1.1	1.3	2.2
n	2,635	38,859	3,314	47,197	4,774	58,655	85	5,289	75,424
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	1.5	2.2	1.4	2.0	1.4	2.1	1.1	1.3	1.8
n	1,077	12,241	1,523	13,771	1,954	14,985	38	1,723	14,818

VCP User	Pre-VCP				Post-VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait-time (mean)	1.0	2.7	1.7	2.3	1.5	2.1	1.1	1.3	2.4
n	2	23	5	27	5	53	85	10	64
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	1.0	2.2	1.5	2.2	1.3	1.6	1.1	1.3	1.8
n	2	12	4	16	5	13	38	7	17

Results Summary

- Per capita **VCP utilization was often higher for mileage/hardship** versus wait-time group
 - Higher for mental health (4.5 vs. 3.6), rehabilitation (6.0 vs. 5.8), and primary care (1.4 vs. 1.3)
 - Equivalent for medical specialty care (1.5) and radiology (1.1)
 - Lower for alternative medicine (5.0 vs. 6.1)
- Per capita **VHA utilization generally lowest after VCP** implementation (FY2015) compared to before VCP implementation (FY2012-2014)
 - In all 6 care groups and eligibility types for VCP eligibles
 - In most cases for VCP users – except in radiology, wait-time medical specialty care, and mileage/hardship rehabilitation

Limitations

- First year of program
- VCP data in CDW are new and need further evaluation
- No historical VCP eligibility information in CDW
 - No start and end dates for VCP eligibility
 - No information on transitions between eligibility type
- Future work needed to examine validity of category-of-care variable

Implications

- Low VCP utilization
 - VHA access relatively adequate prior to VCP?
 - Veterans prefer care in VHA?
 - Easier to use another source of payment for care outside VHA?
 - Veterans still learning about program?
- VCP implementation might have had an impact on VHA utilization amongst OEF/OIF/OND veterans

VHA's Changing Role

- **Growing role as payer**
 - Consolidation of traditional Fee and VCP planned (Public Law 114-41)
 - Pressure from Congress
 - E.g., Senator McCain's "Care Veterans Deserve" plan – provide VCP cards to all veterans
- **External environment**
 - Opposite force – to decrease care fragmentation
 - Improve quality and outcomes, decrease costs
 - Mixed evidence on achievability in ACO literature

Questions?

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Unique VCP Eligibles by Fiscal Year

Choice Group	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015
Wait-time	90,196	104,834	119,522	133,198
Mileage and/or Hardship	58,909	67,368	74,619	81,251
Total	149,105	172,202	194,171	214,449