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Hangar Flying Newsletter

A Publication of the JBLM McChord Field Retiree Activities Office for Air Force Retirees, their spouses and survivors. Department of the Air Force, 100 Joe Jackson Blvd, Customer Service Mall Rm 1001, McChord Field WA 98438-1114; Phone (253) 982-3214 (Voice Mail 24 hours a day) Fax 253-982-5234. Email – retaffairs@us.af.mil Web Site www.mcchordrao.com Retiree Activities Office: Open 0900-1200 Monday - Friday



To Retirees From the Wing Commander: I'm always humbled when I think about the many sacrifices you and your families have made throughout the years, both to our Air Force and to our Nation. Just last week I was again reminded of your selfless service when JBLM commemorated the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War by honoring so many of you who sacrificed so much during a time of turbulence and uncertainty. While this occasion serves as a sober reminder of the gratitude we owe to our veterans who have given so much, it also serves as a humbling context for those serving today. That's motivation we'll undoubtedly need as we find ourselves in a period of higher than normal ops tempo. No doubt, the **Rapid Global Mobility** we provide for the United States and our allies remains in high demand! Whether supporting our Air Force's highest priority carrying nuclear weapons, assisting humanitarian efforts in Africa in response to the Ebola crisis, or providing equipment and supplies to the National Science Foundation in the unforgiving climate of Antarctica, it's clear to see the phenomenal impact our Airmen have around the world.

Additionally, as we transition people and assets out of Afghanistan, the heavy logistical requirements placed on our system of aircraft, aircrews and maintainers means that we must continue to find efficiencies in how we operate. This fact of life is reinforced as our Air Force reduces personnel and aircraft inventory due to budget cuts over the next few years. But make no doubt; I have the utmost confidence in our Airmen's ability to carry forward their bold and innovative spirit to successfully meet today's challenges and take advantage of opportunities to make things better.

Part of my responsibility as a Wing Commander is to empower our folks to meet those challenges by ensuring our people, processes, and resources properly align with Air Force priorities. About a year ago, our Air Force rolled out a new framework called the Commanders Inspection Program to do just that. Shortly after I took command, we went to work integrating our day-to-day business processes within 4 categories called Major Graded Areas (MGAs). Last month, inspectors from Air Mobility Command (AMC) and Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) came to McChord Field to grade us on how well we are doing with regard to these MGAs in what is called a Unit Effectiveness Inspection Capstone Event. I'm very proud to report that we earned a "very strong" Effective rating from the inspection team. While there is certainly more work to be done, I believe the foundation we've laid will allow us to continue to improve the way we identify and track issues so that we can make decisions based on timely, accurate, and meaningful data.

Let me close by simply saying thanks! Your faithful and dedicated service is what made and what keeps this Nation great. Your continued support for our Airmen and their families truly makes a difference. I look forward to speaking with you again soon!

Promoting Mental Health: Mental health care is an important priority of the Military Health System. Education about mental illness and available mental health services to service members and their families is important.

Although Congress established the first full week of October as Mental Illness Awareness Week, TRICARE encourages awareness all year long. This observance is even more important today for our service members and their families who grapple with the stress of deployments and frequent moves on top of the stresses of typical family life.

Mental health disorders are treatable. The burden from most mental health concerns can be decreased by actively participating in an individual treatment plan. TRICARE covers mental health care that is medically or psychologically necessary. There are many different types of outpatient and inpatient mental health care, and the coverage varies by the type of care. For more information on getting care, visit www.tricare.mil/mentalhealth.

There are also crisis phone lines available when you or a loved one needs help right away; call 800-273-8255 or text 838255. By recognizing the signs and symptoms of mental health concerns, we can all be an advocate for mental health services. The National Alliance on Mental Illness has a website, www.nami.org, dedicated to educating people about mental illness, symptoms, treatment and services. (*Source TRICARE*)

TRICARE Urges Beneficiaries to Prepare for Flu Season: Fever? Check. Muscle aches? Check. Chills? It's almost flu and cold season beneficiaries, and in order to make sure these flu symptoms don't ruin your Fall, the best way to protect yourself is with the flu vaccination.

Influenza, also known as the flu, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone six months of age and older get a flu vaccine every year. Serious flu cases can result in hospitalization or death. Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at a higher risk for contracting the disease and developing serious complications.

TRICARE covers two forms of the flu vaccination, the flu shot and the flu mist. Beneficiaries can get the flu vaccine at no cost from military hospitals and clinics, or any TRICARE-authorized provider and participating network pharmacies.

Additionally, beneficiaries can make use of the new TRICARE Nurse Advice Line (NAL) especially after normal business hours, if you are traveling or if you cannot reach your Military Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) or Primary Care Manager (PCM). The NAL nurses will ask you questions about your symptoms; based on a standard set of questions developed by physicians and nurses, and will recommend either self-care, or for you to seek medical help from a provider. If self-care is appropriate, NAL nurses will give you advice on what to do. If you need to seek medical help from a provider, the NAL will help you decide what the best place is for you to seek care based on your medical condition.

Please remember that the patient with the medical problem will need to be present during the NAL assessment. If the patient is a minor, the NAL will ask the parent to assess the child's symptoms or may ask to listen to the child cough in order to help make the best recommendation on needed care. If you have questions about lab or other medical tests, prescription refills or questions on benefits, please contact your PCM or clinic directly. To take advantage of the MHS' newest initiative to improve access to safe, high quality care, call the NAL toll-free 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-800-TRICARE, option 1. (*Continued on the next page*)

Remember, if you are feeling ill, you can always call your PCM or MTF to make an appointment. Beneficiaries enrolled at an MTF can contact their PCM via secure messaging through the RelayHealth/MiCare portal, or make an appointment on TRICARE Online.

To learn more about flu basics, treatment and prevention, visit www.cdc.gov/flu. For more information on TRICARE coverage and where to get flu vaccines go to www.TRICARE.mil/flu. (Source: TRICARE)

TRICARE Beneficiaries Will No Longer Receive Mailed Letters for Benefit

Updates: TRICARE beneficiaries need to watch their email and ensure they have a milConnect account to receive information about changes to their TRICARE coverage. The Department of Defense is no longer sending paper letters to notify beneficiaries about changes to their coverage and eligibility status. Beneficiaries will now receive emails or post cards directing them to online resources where they can view their information.

When you have correspondence from TRICARE, you'll get it one of two ways. If you have a valid email address in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS), you'll get an email telling you to go milConnect to read your letter. If you don't have an email address in DEERS, you'll get a post card directing you to milConnect. The emails and post cards won't contain private information, only a short generic message to inform you of a change to your coverage or eligibility. Most letters regarding your TRICARE benefit will now be online at milConnect only. You will need to maintain a DoD Self-Service Logon (DS Logon) account to continue to receive electronic letters. milConnect can also be accessed using your Common Access Card (CAC) or Defense Finance and Accounting Services (DFAS) pin, if applicable. However, it is recommended that sponsors and dependents 18 and over obtain a DS logon as it can be used for access to multiple web sites from milConnect, to regional contractor sites to TRICARE Online to various Veterans Affairs sites. Click the "Sign Up" button on milConnect to find out more.

Beneficiaries who opt to receive email notifications can retrieve their health care information by logging on to milConnect, going to <http://www.tricare.mil> to review general benefits information, or contacting your regional contractor for help. This will get the information to you quicker, and since milConnect is available anywhere with internet access, you'll be notified of changes even if you're away from home.

It's important to go to <http://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil> to sign up or update your email contact information. Without a DS Logon, CAC, or DFAS pin you won't be able to view this information. Once you sign-up, you will receive up-to-date benefit information such as primary care manager changes, new and replacement enrollment cards, eligibility and enrollment changes due to age or changes in member status, voluntary or involuntary disenrollment actions, and more. You can click on the "MyProfile" menu item to update your personal email preference. Allow three days for revised settings to take effect.

(SOURCE: TRICARE News Release at

http://www.tricare.mil/CoveredServices/BenefitUpdates/Archives/10_01_14_NoMoreLetters.aspx)

Federal research seeks alternatives to addictive opioids for veterans in pain

The National Institutes of Health and the Department of Veterans Affairs has announced that they will launch a five-year, \$21.7 million [initiative](#) to study the effectiveness of alternative therapies to opioids through a series of 13 research projects. Nearly half of all troops returning home from Afghanistan and Iraq are suffering from chronic pain, more than double the civilian population, [according to the Journal of the American Medical Association](#). Many of those veterans have been prescribed opioids. The drugs often have disabling side effects, and some studies show they are often addictive and may exacerbate pain conditions in some patients. The joint research program includes studies on the use of morning light to treat lower-back pain and post-traumatic stress disorder, and the use of chiropractors, self-hypnosis and meditation to reduce pain, said Josephine P. Briggs, director of the [National Center of Complementary and Alternative Medicine](#) at NIH. (Continued on the next page)

Funding for the initiative comes from the NCCAM, the [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#) and the VA's Health Services Research and Development Division. The research projects will be done at academic institutions and VA medical centers across the United States. "This is a very urgent issue for the soldiers returning home — the magnitude of the problem is huge," Briggs said. "We believe this research will provide much-needed information that will help our military and their family members, and ultimately anyone suffering from chronic pain and related conditions." Chronic pain disproportionately affects those who have served or are serving in the military. A June 2014 report in JAMA Internal Medicine showed an alarmingly high rate of chronic pain — 44 percent — among members of the U.S. military after combat deployment, compared to 26 percent in the general public.

"Many of them are at risk for a lifetime progression of increasing disability unless the quality, variety, and accessibility of evidenced-based 'self-management' skills are improved," the report said. "Without more effective and less costly approaches to pain management, the estimated costs of care and disability to the country will approach \$5 trillion."

Prescription opioids are one tool for managing pain, but their greater availability and increased prescribing may contribute to their growing misuse, said Nora D. Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse. "This body of research will add to the growing arsenal of pain management options to give relief while minimizing the potential for abuse, especially for those bravely serving our nation in the armed forces," Volkow said. (*Source, The Washington Post*).

New electronic form to streamline chaotic VA claims process: The Department of Veterans Affairs is changing the way veterans file disability claims, in the hopes of speeding up the process.

The new system, which introduces standardized electronic forms for veterans to fill out, is aimed at streamlining a chaotic process that had led to delays in handling claims and appeals. In the past veterans could file claims and appeals on any piece of paper, which often caused delays because of missing information, according to a VA news release.

"We must do everything that we can to make it as fast and easy as possible for Veterans and their survivors to file for and receive an accurate decision on their claim," VA Secretary Robert McDonald said in a press release. The VA is also standardizing the intent-to-file form — after veterans or survivors submit that form, they have one year to gather documentation and evidence for the claim.

The new regulations go into effect in late March. Lauren Augustine, legislative associate for the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, said veterans groups have long been pushing for such a change.

"We view it as a move in the right direction to creating an efficient process," she said.

The VA has come under heavy criticism in recent months for its treatment of veterans amid a health care scandal that included hospital administrators falsifying records and patients dying while on secret wait lists. McDonald has promised vast reforms to the VA, including major changes by Nov. 11, which is Veterans Day. (*Source, Stars and Stripes*)

Social Security's Disability Program Can Help Veterans: Did you know that many disabled veterans and wounded warriors may qualify for Social Security disability benefits, in addition to their Veterans Affairs benefits? To assist veterans and members of the public to better understand the Social Security disability process, the SSA has created a seven-part YouTube video at <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGSYaZN04xzFCoEqDIY3n7xgWLh55vvDh>

Earlier this year, the SSA also launched a disability education and awareness campaign, The Faces and Facts of Disability at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityfacts/>, to share information about the disability program and the people it helps. (*Continued on the next page*)

Through this campaign, the SSA hope to educate the public about the Social Security Disability Insurance program and dispel common misconceptions. For more information, please go to www.socialsecurity.gov. (SOURCE: Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs Newsletter at http://www.veterans.arkansas.gov/uploads/1/9/1/5/19152923/adva_vet_news_sept_25_2014.pdf)

Nationwide Telephone Scam Affecting TRICARE Beneficiaries

TRICARE beneficiaries need to be aware of a telephone scam affecting beneficiaries over 65 and on Medicare nationwide.

A caller will usually identify themselves as being an official Medicare vendor, and will then offer to sell you back braces. The caller may have specific information that makes the call seem official, typically your address, phone numbers and doctor's name. The caller is hoping this will convince you they are a legitimate vendor and that you will give them your social security number and additional personal information.

If you receive a call like this, DO NOT give any of your personal identifiable information, such as birth date, social security number or banking information. TRICARE never asks beneficiaries for this information when calling for an official Department of Defense survey.

The Defense Health Agency (DHA) Program Integrity Office is closely monitoring this situation. If you receive a call of this nature, please do not provide your information and contact the DHA Program Integrity Office directly. For more information on fraud and abuse reporting visit, www.TRICARE.mil/fraud.

Telemarketing and Unwanted Mail: What can you do about the growing pile of unwanted mail in your mailbox and unwelcome telemarketers on your phone? Actually there are several things that you can do:

- Tell companies you do business with to remove your name from customer list they rent or sell to others. Look for information on how to opt out of marketing list on sales materials, mail, and websites.
- Use the services provided by the Direct Marketing Association consumer@the-dma.org to remove your name from most national telemarketing, mail and email list.
- Call the credit reporting agencies' notification system at 1-888-567-8688. This will reduce the number of un solicited credit and insurance offers you get. All three major credit bureaus participate in this program.
- Under U.S. Postal Service (USPS) rules, it is illegal to send mail that looks like it is from a government agency when it is not. It is also illegal to send mail that looks like a bill when nothing was ordered, unless it clearly states it is not a bill. Report violations of this rule to USPS www.postalinspectors.uspis.gov . **National Do Not Call Registry:** The federal Government's Do Not Call Registry allow you to restrict telemarketing calls permanently by registering your phone number at www.donotcall.gov or by calling 1-888-382-1222. If you receive telemarketing calls after your number has been registered for three months you can file a complaint using the same website or toll free telephone number. However, political organizations, charities, and organizations with which you have a relationship may still call you. Telemarketers are not allowed to call cell phones by law so while it is not necessary you can still add your cell number to the do not call registry. (Continued on the next page)

Pre-Recorded Messages: Pre-Recorded sales calls or robocalls are illegal. Companies cannot transmit these messages or send text messages to consumers who have not agreed, in writing to accept such messages. A

company cannot contact you based on a prior business relationship. Prerecorded call calls may only be made to residential phone numbers in the following cases:

- Emergency calls needed to ensure your health and safety
- Calls that do not include any unsolicited advertisements.
- Calls by or on behalf of, tax-exempt nonprofit organizations.
- Calls for which you have given prior consent.

If you get a phone call from someone who claims to be with your bank and/or credit card company and the person ask you to provide or confirm any information:

- Do not answer any questions.
- Hang up immediately.
- Call your bank or credit card company directly and describe what happened.

(Source: 2014 Consumer Action Handbook www.U.S.A.gov/consumer)

[Justice Department Launches Elder Justice Website](#) : The U.S. Department of Justice has launched [Elder Justice](#), a website to help prevent elder abuse and [financial exploitation](#). The website is a resource for professionals in the field of elder abuse prevention, as well as [victims of elder abuse](#) and their families. Law enforcement and elder justice experts can use the site to share information and raise public awareness. You'll also find [local resources](#) and a series of [frequently asked questions](#) that will answer many of your questions about elder abuse. (Source: [Disability.gov](#))

Military Retirees and Annuitants of Military Retirees: MyPay has gotten easier to use! Password requirements have been reduced from 15 to 9 characters. Once you have established a password, it will remain current for up to 150 days. Update your account now so you have easy access in tax season! For more information on creating a myPay password, check out <http://www.dfas.mil/mypayinfo/password.html>. The link will offer you detailed instructions and video support. Having problems creating your password? Check out <http://www.dfas.mil/dfas/mypayinfo/tipsandtricks.html> for additional help. (Source: Retired and Annuitant Pay)