

VA Annual Update for COM-T Spring GFM (2025)

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Chief of Staff

Introduction

The Southern Arizona VA has had a successful collaboration with the University of Arizona for over 50 years.

As a reminder about our system, we are a 289 bed, Level 1a facility. We have 7 Community Based Outpatient Clinics, extending from Yuma to Casa Grande, to Green Valley and out to Safford.

Unlike many other communities, Tucson has seen sustained growth in the Veteran population. We have an enrolled patient population of over 60,000 Veterans.

Medicine and Subspecialties

- SAVAHCS continues to support Prescott with telehealth Rheumatology and Infectious Disease services.
- Neurology has periodic Saturday clinics, expanding access.
- Neurology collaborated with Inpatient Nursing to initiate inpatient EEG and video monitoring services for patients with unexplained symptoms.
- Nephrology and Nursing have collaborated to resume acute peritoneal dialysis services.
- Neurology Chief Dr. Tanya Lin serves two weeks annually at the University to enhance integration within Neurology.
- The Medicine Service continues to utilize virtual providers to improve access (a rheumatologist in Cincinnati, an oncologist in Seattle, an endocrinologist in Cleveland, and sleep medicine providers in Colorado and Texas).
- SAVAHCS ranks 10th in the nation in Hospital Flow and 24th in the nation in observed minus expected length of stay, efficiencies essential to our accommodating high volumes of inpatients.

Medicine and Subspecialties cont.

- In March 2025 SAVAHCS had its highest volume of inpatient discharges (596) since January of 2019 and the second highest on recent record (613 in March 2018).
- VA Dermatology continues to participate in the successful Mohs fellowship program.
- SAVAHCS launched its structural heart program, performing its first Watchman procedure on 3/13/2024, its first TAVR procedure on 10/17/2024 and its first TEER procedure on 1/21/2025. Dr. Park performed procedures at the University prior to SAVAHCS service launch.
- SAVAHCS continues to enroll in the CSP IMPACT trial for patients with prediabetes and established atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease.
- Rheumatology continues to support same-day access for main campus patients.
- SAVAHCS Oncology is now treating breast cancer cases on site and is working on the protocol for small cell cancer treatment.

SAVAHCS Graduate Medical Education

- OB GYN requested one additional resident FTE.
- Orthopedic Surgery granted two additional resident FTE.
- Pain Medicine Fellowship requested one additional FTE.

Research

- 51 active projects involving 31 investigators
- 1 projects involve biohazards; 8 projects use animal subjects
- 35 involve human subjects of which 3 use investigational drugs
- 21 VA funded, 15 other funding, 18 unfunded
- 14 enrolling Veteran patients.
- **Research Day Wednesday May 21, 2025**
- I. Opening Session: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
- II. Clinical Research Panel : 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
- III. Keynote: 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m
- *‘Growing VA Research: Example of Phoenix VA’*
- Sam Aguayo, MD, Pulmonologist and Director of Lung Cancer Screening
- III. Basic and Translational Research Panel: 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

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Electronic Health Record Modernization

- The Federal EHR is now in use at six VA medical centers (VAMCs) and 26 associated clinics, serving over 188,000 Veterans
- Critical improvements made to the Federal EHR system during the deployment pause announced in April 2023
- In March 2024, the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center, a joint VA-DoD facility, successfully went live with the Federal EHR
 - This marked the completion of the DoD's worldwide deployment of the system
- March 6, 2025 memo: "Accelerate VA EHRM"
 - 13 facilities to go live by 2026
 - Complete deployment at all VA medical facilities is targeted for 2031
- The pre-planning and deployment timeline will be reduced from 24 months to 12 months per site

Key Positions update

- New Anesthesia Chief- Dr. John Zaugg
- New Administrative Medicine Chief- NP Nichole Garris
- Dr. Tan Nguyen current Acting Chief for Path/Lab
- Currently recruiting for vacant Chief of Research
- Currently recruiting for soon to be vacant Chief of Surgery



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Any questions contact: John.Kettelle@va.gov

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