



MICHAEL E. DEBAKEY
VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEDICAL CENTER



Fact Sheet

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General Information

MEDVAMC employs almost 3,900 people. The facility has 420 hospital beds, a 40-bed Spinal Cord Injury Center, and a 120-bed transitional care unit for long-term care.

MEDVAMC operates one of the largest VA residency programs with 269.7 slots in 40 sub-specialties. Each academic year, more than 1,972 students are trained through 144 affiliation agreements with institutions of higher learning in 19 states.

Located on a 118-acre campus and built in 1991, MEDVAMC is a state-of-the-art facility with an automated, computer-controlled transport system delivering food, laundry, and supplies throughout the building. The 6-story granite building is designed with 4 exterior sections and 4 atriums containing patio gardens, wheelchair basketball courts, and a rehabilitation pool. On each floor, there are 4 pneumatic trash and linen chutes. Each chute takes soiled linens and the majority of generated trash directly to either dumpsters or the in-house laundry. This eliminates the possibility of moving contaminated items within the main building.

Free valet parking is available at the MEDVAMC main entrance for Veterans. A “No Tipping” policy is strictly enforced. This service is extremely valuable for elderly, wheelchair or scooter-bound, and heat-sensitive Veterans.

MEDVAMC staff members meet with local Reserve and National Guard units in southeast Texas before and after they deploy in order to brief them on available VA benefits. Working closely with the VA Regional Office, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Camp Pendleton, and the National Naval Medical Center, the MEDVAMC coordinates travel, transfers, and medical care for OIF/OEF service members.

- 1999 Activated in 1977, the Beaumont VA Outpatient Clinic relocated to a new 28,180 square-foot facility. The clinic has more than 55 staff members working in the areas of primary care, pharmacy, laboratory, radiology, physical therapy, mental health, podiatry, and nutrition.
- Nov 2004 MEDVAMC’s VA Outpatient Clinic in Lufkin, activated in 1991, officially renamed under Public Law 108-422 (S. 424) in honor of former U.S. Representative Charles Wilson. Renaming ceremony held on July 7, 2005. On December 7, 2007, the MEDVAMC held a Groundbreaking Event for a new clinic to be located at 2206 North John Redditt Drive.
- Mar 2005 The MEDVAMC opened two new Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Galveston County. The Galveston CBOC opened March 4, 2005 and the Texas City CBOC opened April 4, 2005.
- Apr 2005 VA's largest Fisher House opened at the MEDVAMC. The new Fisher House includes guest suites with private baths, communal kitchen, living and dining rooms, a library, a family room and a manager’s office. This facility is available free of charge to families of Veterans being treated for long-term illnesses.
- Aug 2005 MEDVAMC added an extremely important and timely program to its array of available health care services, a Polytrauma Network Site in order to care for returning war-wounded with complex, multiple injuries such as amputations, traumatic brain injuries, and psychological adjustment problems.

- Aug 2005 As the country realized the devastation Hurricane Katrina inflicted along the Gulf Coast, the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) activated. In Houston, this meant area hospitals geared up to receive patients from the hurricane-affected areas under the coordination of the MEDVAMC. That day, the MEDVAMC moved supplies, equipment, and personnel to Ellington Field to establish a Patient Reception Team (PRT). With the first C-130 Air National Guard military transport aircraft arriving at 9 p.m. on August 31, 2005, the MEDVAMC PRT medically triaged almost 800 patients from 21 flights in the next five days. The patients, ranging from a 4-month-old to the very elderly, suffered from dehydration and fatigue. The team saw a variety of medical conditions including recent organ transplants, blood clots, ventilator-dependent patients, obstetric emergencies, heart attacks, emergency dialysis, infections, and strokes. In the next two weeks, the MEDVAMC admitted more than 100 patients from the hurricane-affected areas.
- Sep 2005 As part of a multi-level plan to provide health care to Veterans evacuated from New Orleans, the MEDVAMC opened the New Orleans Houston-based VA Outpatient Clinic on September 8, 2005. The clinic provided primary care, pharmacy, and mental health services for hurricane-affected Veterans.
- Dec 2005 MEDVAMC opened a Diagnostic Referral Center (DRC), providing outpatient surgery and specialty care services (orthopedics, neurosurgery, vascular, cardiothoracic, cardiology, ophthalmology, and gastro-intestinal) to nine other VAMCs within VISN 16. As of August 2010, the DRC provided an average of 225 outpatient care consults per month.
- Aug 2006 MEDVAMC officially designated as a Liver Transplant Center from the VA.
- Oct 2006 MEDVAMC opened a new Cancer Center, a 14,000 square foot, completely remodeled wing, to bring together health care specialists from all parts of the medical center including Medical Oncology, Hematology, Surgical Oncology, Urology, Radiation Oncology, Digestive Diseases, Pulmonary Medicine, and Pathology with the goal of ensuring each Veteran receives state of the art cancer care.
- Feb 2007 MEDVAMC held a ribbon cutting ceremony on February 26, 2007 opening a new Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Conroe.
- Jun 2007 MEDVAMC accepted an offer from the T.L.L. Temple Foundation to fund a multi-year contract supplying a 50-passenger coach with a restroom and capacity for two wheelchair bound passengers to transport Veterans from Lufkin to the medical center in Houston.
- Mar 2008 MEDVAMC converted Bldg. 120 to a new, 2,900 square foot home for the Visual Impairment Service Team, Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialist program, and new Visual Impairment Services Outpatient Rehabilitation (VISOR) program.
- Apr 2008 Approximately \$12.3 million was approved by the VA South Central VA Health Care Network for health care improvements at the MEDVAMC. These additional funds will be used to expand specialty care at its outpatient clinics in Beaumont, Conroe, and Lufkin; add 20 inpatient beds to its Mental Health Care Line; boost dental services; increase space for radiotherapy technology; and support several smaller projects.
- Jun 2008 MEDVAMC opened a 40-bed domiciliary residence for homeless Veterans on June 30, 2008. The new facility, located at 7329 Fannin Street, features 14 apartments with kitchenettes and a 40-person dining facility.
- Mar 2009 MEDVAMC held a special Ribbon Cutting Ceremony officially re-opening its VA Outpatient Clinic on Galveston Island. The building was destroyed by Hurricane Ike in September 2008.
- Jun 2009 MEDVAMC awarded a five-year \$5 million grant from the VA Office of Research and Development to establish a new VA Rehabilitation Research Center of Excellence focusing on mild to moderate traumatic brain injury.
- Aug 2009 Charles Wilson VA Outpatient Clinic celebrates new facility with a ribbon cutting ceremony. Located on approximately seven acres of land on the west side of Lufkin just off Loop 287, the new, 37,000 square-foot facility will replace both the VA outpatient clinic located at 1301 West Frank Avenue and the Mental Health Clinic Annex at 1514 Ellis Avenue.

- Sep 2009 MEDVAMC opened a new Post-Deployment Clinic to serve as a "Welcome Center" for OEF/OIF Veterans. The Post-Deployment Clinic will be a "one-stop" center performing multi-disciplinary evaluations tailored to the individual's physical, mental, and social needs. Assistance and information regarding non-medical VA benefits and community resources will also be available.
- 2010 Parking capacity on the VA complex will increase by more than 500 parking spaces before summer 2010.
- May 2010 MEDVAMC opened a new VA Outpatient Clinic in Richmond, Texas on May 14, 2010 at 22001 Southwest Freeway in the professional building near OakBend Medical Center, close to U.S. Route 59.
- Sep 2010 MEDVAMC held a special Ribbon Cutting Ceremony officially opening its new Women's Health Center.
- Mar 2011 MEDVAMC held a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony reopening its VA outpatient clinic in Texas City on March 21, 2011.
- Oct 2011 MEDVAMC held a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony opening its VA outpatient clinic in Lake Jackson on October 7, 2011.
- Jun 2011 VA awarded \$666,765 to the Harris County Housing Authority to increase permanent housing and case management for area Veterans.
- Aug 2011 VA approved the use of land and resources for a second Fisher House at the MEDVAMC.
- Sep 2011 MEDVAMC completed a highly anticipated renovation of its nationally recognized Eye Clinic.
- Oct 2011 VA ranked the MEDVAMC as the most complex of its 141 medical facilities in terms of patient population, clinical services complexity, intensive care unit and operative complexity, and education and research.
- Nov 2011 The VA announced it will expand its Conroe VA Outpatient Clinic from its current size of 9,000 square feet. A bid solicitation for approximately 29,000 square feet of clinic space and 225 parking spaces in the Conroe area was prepared.
- Sep 2012 A new hospital wing began construction, allowing the Dermatology and Urology Clinics to relocate into much needed, larger spaces late next year.
- Oct 2012 MEDVAMC received official designation as a Kidney Transplant Center from the VA.

Patient Care

MEDVAMC operates a Wound Clinic with wound consults performed by a certified wound-care physician and nurse practitioner. Weekly skin rounds are done in long-term care units to identify and treat skin breakdowns early. In both Home-based Primary Care and long-term care units, digital cameras are used to document wound healing and progression in each patient's medical record. Wound prevalence studies are performed quarterly. Long-term care patients must have a physician's order to remain in bed; otherwise, all patients are assisted from their bed daily.

Pressure ulcer prevention is a multifaceted process at the MEDVAMC. Unit skin resource nurses assess each patient for specific needs. This includes pressure-reducing mattresses, special boots to protect the heels and feet, turning schedules as well as out-of-bed schedules, and skin care treatment plans designed to improve the overall condition of the skin. Each patient's nutritional status is examined and supplements are provided if indicated. Physical therapy is consulted if needed to facilitate a patient's ability to move about in the bed independently.

- Jan 2005 New telemetry system installed allowing staff members to monitor inpatients for vital signs and arrhythmias when they are located virtually in any bed in the facility.

- Jan 2006 The Substance Dependence and Vocational Rehabilitation Program at the MEDVAMC received funding to serve as a mentor site for a new initiative focusing on Veterans with severe mental illnesses. The "Supported Employment" program is designed primarily to help disabled Veterans find and maintain competitive employment.
- Mar 2006 MEDVAMC opened a fifth Primary Care Clinic inside its main hospital building in Houston.
- Mar 2006 The complete restructuring of all Urology clinics more than doubled the number of appointments slots each month, from 776 to over 1,700. The clinic's hours expanded to five days a week, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. The clinic's no-show/cancellation rate dropped from 28 percent to 16 percent since the change. Most importantly, appointments made within 30 days for virtually all patients and within a week for many.
- May 2006 The MEDVAMC Outpatient Pharmacy held the grand opening of its new check-in system and expanded waiting area.
- Feb 2007 Houston became one of 30 communities where the VA takes its substance abuse services directly to the area's homeless. Under its Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program, the MEDVAMC received special funding to hire an addiction therapist who will work directly in homeless shelters, counseling Veterans with substance abuse problems.
- Apr 2007 Veterans with diabetes in southeast Texas receive initial screening for possible eye disease during their primary care appointments at the MEDVAMC and the Beaumont VA Outpatient Clinic, thanks to a national teleretinal imaging program.
- Apr 2007 The MEDVAMC developed and expanded several programs to provide mental health screening, counseling, and early treatment to meet the needs of our nation's newest Veterans — the men and women who have served in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq (OIF).
- Aug 2007 The MEDVAMC hosted the 21st National Veterans Golden Age Games in Houston. More than 625 Veterans over the age of 55, from all over the country, participated in the Games.
- Nov 2007 As part of the treatment course for stroke victims, Medical Care Line and the Neurology Care Line at the MEDVAMC established a Neuro-Medical Stepdown Unit.
- Dec 2007 A 63 year-old, U.S. Navy Veteran from Webster, Tx. became first patient to undergo orthotopic liver transplantation at the MEDVAMC. The surgery on November 30 represented a milestone locally in the field of organ transplantation and provides end-stage liver disease Veterans with state-of-the-art care.
- Sep 2008 By focusing on ways to improve operating room efficiency and providing additional support services, the wait time for Total Knee Arthroplasty (TKA) surgery has decreased by 92 percent.
- Sep 2008 On the eve of Hurricane Ike, MEDVAMC performed an orthotopic liver transplantation on a 59 year-old, U.S. Army Veteran from Missouri. Physicians believed they could not deny a Veteran the chance for a potential life-saving procedure.
- Mar 2009 A Rapid Response Team was put into action for inpatients at the MEDVAMC. The team includes a Medical/Neuro Step-Down nurse practitioner, a respiratory therapist, and a physician, usually the pulmonary fellow or the in-house resident after regular business hours. Any health care provider who is worried about his or her patient has the ability to call the Rapid Response Team at the first sign of a patient decline. Within minutes, a team of professionals rush to the patient's bedside in an attempt to reverse the patient's instability.
- Mar 2009 Dermatologists at the MEDVAMC have a wide variety of treatments, valuable information, and technology at their fingertips to keep veterans from developing skin cancer and treat those who are suffering from the disease.

- Sep 2009 In a report in the *Journal of Surgical Research*, researchers from the MEDVAMC, Baylor College of Medicine (BCM), and the University of Houston, found only 1.6% of patients who underwent coronary artery bypass graft surgery at the DeBakey VA died in the hospital compared to 3% at non-VA facilities.
- Nov 2009 The MEDVAMC opened two new nursing units to provide specialized inpatient mental health services for returning combat troops and for women Veterans.
- Mar 2010 MEDVAMC expanded its HUD-VASH Program, an initiative to provide supportive housing through case management and supportive services for homeless Veterans, to the Beaumont and Galveston areas.
- Apr 2010 The Women's Health Center at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center opened 14 years ago, on April 8, 1996.
- May 2010 MEDVAMC established a limb salvage program to help prevent amputations and improve the quality of life of Veterans.
- June 2010 MEDVAMC surgeon completes one thousandth liver transplant. The survival rate is more than 95 percent for the MEDVAMC liver transplant program. It is the No. 1 program in Texas among programs performing more than 35 transplants yearly.
- Oct 2010 MEDVAMC held an Adapted Sports Expo targeting amputee, polytrauma, and spinal cord injury Veterans to introduce them to such activities such as wheelchair basketball, power soccer, and quad rugby.
- Oct 2010 MEDVAMC, in cooperation with The Task Force for Houston Area Homeless Veterans, The Coalition for the Homeless and U.S. Veterans Initiative, held the 10th Annual Houston Area Stand Down for homeless Veterans.
- 2010 In FY 2008, the average "Door to Balloon" time at the MEDVAMC was 82 minutes. A year later, the staff improved the time to 61 minutes. The American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association guidelines call for a door-to-balloon time of less than 90 minutes for hospitals.
- Dec 2010 Recommendations on the safety and effectiveness of vascular closure devices were released by an American Heart Association expert panel made up of physicians and researchers, including two cardiologists from the MEDVAMC.
- Apr 2011 In order to meet the growing needs of homeless, female Veterans in southeast Texas, VA awarded a VA Per Diem Project to the Santa Maria Hostel, a 501©(3) non-profit organization.
- Oct 2011 MEDVAMC, in cooperation with more than 60 federal, state, local, and charitable organizations, held the 11th Annual Houston Area Stand Down for homeless Veterans.
- Jun 2011 MEDVAMC will hire an additional 33 clinicians and 7 support personnel to support mental health operations. Currently, almost 500 mental health clinicians and support staff work in southeast Texas.
- Jul 2011 VA awarded almost \$2 million in homeless prevention grants to Harris, Ft. Bend, and Montgomery Counties.
- Dec 2012 MEDVAMC performed its 50th orthotopic liver transplantation on a 69 year-old, U.S. Air Force Veteran from Morganza, La.
- Dec 2012 MEDVAMC expanded optometry services in Lufkin, Galveston, and Texas City.

Patient & Environmental Safety and Well-Being

MEDVAMC is in full compliance with all Joint Commission National Patient Safety Goals and monitors ongoing compliance through twice-weekly rounds and other established internal controls.

MEDVAMC Infection Control program in place diligently monitors infection occurrences to compare results with expected outcomes for the patient population surveyed. In turn, this information is used to improve the care of future patients. Infection surveillance strategies at the MEDVAMC are facility-specific. The surveillance plan was designed after assessing the types of patients served. Surveillance activities target nosocomial infections or related processes that impact the highest risk patients, which occur with high frequency, or which may result in the most significant outcomes.

Waterless hand-washing dispensers are in place on all MEDVAMC long-term care units.

MEDVAMC housekeeping staff receives initial training and subsequent refresher training in the areas of safety, infection control, and the latest cleaning technology. In conjunction with MEDVAMC Infection Control, a housekeeper's checklist for special cleaning of patient rooms developed in November 2003. In addition, an Environmental Management Service (EMS) inspection checklist established to assist supervisors in tracking the cleanliness of the MEDVAMC. While housekeeping supervisors conduct regular inspections, unit managers and specialists are required to conduct follow-up inspections, and two environmental and patient safety inspections each week.

Housekeeping services are provided daily to all patient rooms, while additional services are provided in cases of emergencies, spills, and accidents. Bed services are provided when patients are discharged. This includes terminal cleaning of the room prior to the next patient being admitted. In an attempt to reduce the downtime of a room, discharges are sent to the EMS through a computer system. Section supervisors are also available via two-way radios if special cleaning situations arise.

MEDVAMC has a very active safety program, managed by 7 fulltime staff members. MEDVAMC promotes a safe working environment through its injury prevention program. First, with education, staff members seek to eliminate workplace hazards and unsafe practices before they cause accidents. Second, they investigate accidents to determine corrective actions to prevent further accidents. Supervisors participate in the investigations along with safety staff to determine the facts of the incident as well as appropriate corrective actions.

MEDVAMC has an Accident Review Board (ARB) chaired by the facility's chief nurse executive that promotes a safe environment for employees, patients, and visitors. The ARB reviews, analyzes, and conducts investigations of all lost-time injuries and illnesses. The ARB determines root causes, ensures that recommended corrective actions preclude recurrences, and monitors implementation of corrective actions to ensure their effectiveness.

Staff members in patient care areas at the MEDVAMC trained in how to handle bio-hazardous materials and waste. Waste is transferred in a sanitary manner to large, covered waste containers that are subsequently taken by a contractor for incineration.

- May 2002 MEDVAMC implemented preventive steps, including a Pre-Operative Briefing Checklist, to ensure patient safety in surgery and improve communication among surgical team members. MEDVAMC has several safeguards and processes to educate and familiarize all health care professionals about the actions that need to be taken to prevent adverse events from happening. With direction and support from MEDVAMC executive leadership, education and training of staff members is ongoing and now part of daily routine.
- Jan 2005 MEDVAMC completed a major renovation project upgrading all patient rooms for a more comfortable and home-like environment. This \$1.8 million dollar project replaced night stands, over-bed tables, visitor chairs, patient recliners, privacy curtains, draperies, light fixtures, patient education boards, clocks, wallpaper, countertops, and wall decorations, plus it installed ceiling lifts for patients at a cost of \$500,000 in all rooms in the long-term care and spinal cord injury units.

- Jun 2006 MEDVAMC installed an emergency evacuation device on its inpatient beds for non-ambulatory patients. Using the "Evacusled," MEDVAMC staff members can quickly and easily move patients down stairwells, through corridors, and out of the building to safety during a crisis situation.
- Aug 2008 Since the introduction of the VA's Patient Restraint Policy, the MEDVAMC has made significant progress in minimizing the use of patient restraints by its staff. The culture change of the entire clinical team has made the difference in reducing restraint usage by more than 75%.
- Aug 2011 MEDVAMC began use of a new, \$1.4 million meal transportation system that keeps each food the right temperature and speeds delivery.
- Oct 2011 Nurses at the MEDVAMC have been using the Human Caring Theory of Nursing pioneered by Dr. Jean Watson for the past year. The goal of nursing with Watson's theory is centered around helping the patient gain a higher degree of harmony within the mind, body, and soul. It is achieved through caring transactions and involves the transpersonal caring relationship. Transpersonal caring is demonstrated in an event or actual caring occasion.

Staff Collaboration

The Graduate Medical Education Committee, which membership consists of senior management, nursing leadership, residents, VA education leaders, VA residency program coordinators, and directors of selected allied health training programs meets monthly and provides a forum for discussing medical education as well as allied health training, making recommendations to address resident and other learners' concerns and issues, and sharing information at MEDVAMC.

The MEDVAMC conducts on-going resident and medical student orientation sessions. This training is extremely comprehensive covering topics such as illnesses unique to the Veteran population, patient rights and responsibilities, communication skills, conflict resolution, informed consent, supervision and position responsibility, medical record documentation, infection control, computer systems, and information about VA health care.

Credentialing at the MEDVAMC is a systematic and continuous process of screening and evaluating the qualifications of all health care providers. This includes primary source verification of all, licensure, certifications, registrations, required education, relevant training and experience, and evaluation of current competence and health status; verifying educational institutions are accredited and degree programs meet required criteria; and searching Department of Health and Human Services Exclusion List to ensure employees have not previously defrauded any government health program.

- 2004 Medical Care Line Executive initiated town hall meetings for its residents. These monthly forums allow medical residents and students to bring their concerns directly to senior management officials and subject matter experts such as the pharmacy director, housekeeping manager, and radiology chief.
- Nov 2005 MEDVAMC established a Colorectal Cancer Center, the first of its type in the VA, to ensure Veterans receive timely evaluation with diagnostic procedures and appropriate, multiple, and innovative treatments and therapies.
- Jun 2008 MEDVAMC formed two new nursing governance councils to ensure its patients continue to receive only the highest quality nursing care and to have access to the latest in nursing innovations and technology. On each of these committees, Veterans play key roles and offer valuable insight.
- Nov 2008 The MEDVAMC began collaborating with the Robertson Blood Center, a U.S. Army Blood Bank based at the Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center at Ft. Hood, Texas to save taxpayer money and maximize the use of a valuable and perishable resource.

Aug 2010 The South Central VA Health Care Network established a Virtual Tumor Board at the MEDVAMC using state-of-the-art telemedicine technology to ensure Veterans have direct and immediate access to the multidisciplinary team of experienced and knowledgeable cancer care specialists in Houston.

Awards, Reviews, and Accreditations

- Sep 2002 MEDVAMC awarded accreditation from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations as a result of its demonstrated compliance with the Joint Commission's nationally recognized health care standards. MEDVAMC surveyed and received accreditation in the following programs: hospital, long-term care, behavioral health care, substance abuse, and home care. In addition, JCAHO found no sanitation concerns, patient safety issues, or infection control issues.
- 2003 VA Office of Inspector General OIG conducted a Combined Assessment Program review evaluated selected operations, focusing on quality of care, cleanliness, and management controls. Review of MEDVAMC affirmed MEDVAMC provides high quality health care to Veterans. Also significant are the high levels of patient and employee satisfaction noted by the CAP review team.
- 2003 MEDVAMC awarded a three-year Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities accreditation for Rehabilitation Care Line's Comprehensive Integrated Inpatient Rehabilitation Program in November. In addition, the Spinal Cord Injury program received a three-year CARF accreditation in September, the Health Care for Homeless Veterans program received a three-year CARF accreditation in March, and the Comprehensive Work Therapy program received a three-year CARF accreditation in July 2002.
- 2003 The medical knowledge company, Best Doctors, Inc. included 82 physicians who provide patient care at the MEDVAMC in the latest compilation of The Best Doctors in America[®] database.
- 2003 MEDVAMC had two extensive outside reviews of part-time physician timekeeping practices. An April 2003 Inspector General report, as part of the Combined Assessment Program review, found no issues with part-time physicians at MEDVAMC. A November 2003 General Accounting Office review found only one small discrepancy of one non-core hour when reviewing our part-time physician timekeeping practices. MEDVAMC remains vigilant in this area and continues to conduct internal audits as part of our ongoing monitoring processes.
- Dec 2003 Commission on Cancer of the American College of Surgeons granted a three-year approval to the cancer program at the MEDVAMC.
- Dec 2003 MEDVAMC received notice the Mental Health Care Line placed in the top two percent in 2003 VA-wide inpatient satisfaction scores.
- Jan 2004 VA National Health Physics Program office inspected the MEDVAMC and found an excellent radiation safety program to oversee the usage of radioactive materials and radiation sources in Nuclear Medicine, Radiology, Radiotherapy, and Research.
- Feb 2004 MEDVAMC received a special award from the National Veterans Affairs Surgical Quality Improvement Program Executive Committee for having consistently low mortality rates in general surgery, all surgery, and all non-cardiac surgery four years in a row. MEDVAMC was only VA facility to receive this commendation.
- Jun 2004 Results of a VA Office of Inspector General Report stated MEDVAMC had an effective Quality Management program to monitor quality of care using national and local performance measures, patient safety records, and utilization reviews.
- Jul 2004 MEDVAMC named one of the nation's "Most Improved," according to the results of the 2004 Most Wired Survey and Benchmarking Study.
- Aug 2004 MEDVAMC awarded a full three-year term of accreditation for its radiation oncology services as the

result of a survey by the American College of Radiology. MEDVAMC's Radiation Oncology Program only program in the state of Texas to receive this accreditation.

- Aug 2004 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Transportation recognized the MEDVAMC as one of Houston's Best Workplaces for Commuters. Second year MEDVAMC wins this award. In addition, the Houston-Galveston Area Council awarded the MEDVAMC the Best Van Pool Company Award and the Outstanding Leadership Award.
- Aug 2004 American Nurses Credentialing Center, the nation's leading nursing credentialing organization, awarded its Magnet Recognition for Excellence in Nursing Services to the MEDVAMC. MEDVAMC only the second VA medical center in the nation to achieve this recognition, and joins fellow Texas Medical Center facilities with Magnet status, The Methodist Hospital, St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, Texas Children's Hospital, and The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. Magnet is the highest honor a health care organization can receive for nursing services. The Magnet program was developed to recognize health care organizations that provide the best in quality patient care and uphold excellence in professional nursing practice.
- Sep 2004 MEDVAMC awarded the Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert W. Carey Organizational Excellence Achievement Award. The Carey Achievement Award is presented to organizations demonstrating effective, systematic approaches to management and producing positive trends and performance levels in key areas of importance.
- Oct 2004 MEDVAMC awarded a three-year accreditation for its echocardiography laboratory in the areas of transthoracic echocardiography, transesophageal echocardiography, and stress echocardiography as the result of a survey by the Intersocietal Commission for Accreditation of Echocardiography Laboratories. MEDVAMC is the only VA with accreditation in all three modalities of echocardiography.
- Dec 2004 MEDVAMC Health Call Center, known as the VA Network Telecare Center, awarded Health Call Center Accreditation from URAC, a Washington, D.C.-based health care accrediting organization that establishes quality standards for the health care industry. MEDVAMC provides 24/7 telephone nurse triage for the 10 VAMCs in the south-central U.S., fielding more than 28,000 calls per month.
- Dec 2004 MEDVAMC medical laboratory awarded re-accreditation by the Commission on Laboratory Accreditation of the College of American Pathologists, based on results of an on-site inspection.
- Feb 2005 MEDVAMC received praise from the Department of Veterans Affairs Continuous Improvement in Cardiac Surgery Program (CICSP) for its remarkable mortality rate of zero percent for coronary artery bypass surgeries in the last six months. In addition, the MEDVAMC commended for demonstrating consistently low mortality rates in its Cardiac Surgery Section.
- Feb 2005 MEDVAMC received special recognition from the National Veterans Affairs Surgical Quality Improvement Program Executive Committee for demonstrating consistently low observed-to-expected mortality rates in general surgery, all surgery, and all non-cardiac surgery five years in a row. The MEDVAMC was only VA facility to receive this commendation.
- Apr 2005 American Board for Certification in Orthotics and Prosthetics approved the MEDVAMC Orthotics and Prosthetics Center for another three-year accreditation. MEDVAMC scored a perfect 100.
- Jul 2005 MEDVAMC named one of the nation's "Most Wired Hospital" the second year in a row, according to the results of the 2005 Most Wired Survey and Benchmarking Study.
- Jul 2005 According to a 2005 Quality Check report from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, the health care the MEDVAMC provides in three critical medical areas ranks among the very best nationwide. The report found MEDVAMC performance in caring for patients with heart attacks, heart failure, and pneumonia was above most nationwide and statewide Joint Commission-accredited organizations.
- Aug 2005 MEDVAMC Coronary Care Unit awarded the COMET award by the American Association of Critical Care
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- Nurses - Houston Gulf Coast Chapter. The COMET award recognizes intensive care units that attain high quality care, provide excellent care to patients, and demonstrate a healthy workplace for nurses.
- Aug 2005 The medical knowledge company, Best Doctors, Inc. included 80 physicians who provide patient care at the MEDVAMC in the latest compilation of The Best Doctors in America[®] database.
- Sep 2005 VA selected the MEDVAMC as the 2005 recipient of the Robert W. Carey Organizational Excellence Award -- VA's top award for quality achievement. Based on the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria, this recognizes commitment to the Veterans and to the community.
- Oct 2005 On October 3, 2005 by unanimous consent, the Senate adopted a resolution of praise for employees of VA for their heroic efforts following Hurricane Katrina. A portion of text of the resolution (S. Res. 263) follows: "Whereas patients and employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Texas provided extraordinary support and medical assistance to Veterans, staff, and families affected by Hurricane Katrina and coordinated numerous medical efforts as part of the overall Federal Government response and recovery efforts in the Gulf Region; and whereas heroic actions and efforts on the part of numerous employees and volunteers of the Department of Veterans Affairs saved countless lives and provided immeasurable comfort to the victims of Hurricane Katrina: Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Senate commends the employees and volunteers of the Department of Veterans Affairs, who risked life and limb to assist Veterans, staff, and their respective families who were affected by Hurricane Katrina."
- Oct 2005 MEDVAMC designated one of the Best Workplaces for CommutersSM by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). In August, the EPA and the DOT recognized the MEDVAMC as one of Houston's Best Workplaces for Commuters. This is the third year the MEDVAMC won this award. For the second year in a row, the Houston-Galveston Area Council presented the MEDVAMC the Best Van Pool Company Award.
- Dec 2005 MEDVAMC awarded three-year Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities accreditations for its Mental Health Care Line's Vocational Rehabilitation and Health Care for Homeless Veterans Programs.
- Jan 2006 The National Committee for Quality Assurance awarded a three-year accreditation to the Human Research Protection Program at the MEDVAMC.
- Apr 2006 MEDVAMC received notification from the National Veterans Affairs Surgical Quality Improvement Program (NSQIP) Executive Committee that it demonstrated consistently low observed-to-expected mortality rates in general surgery, all surgery, and all non-cardiac surgery six years in a row. The MEDVAMC was only VA facility with this record.
- Apr 2006 For more than 50 years, MEDVAMC has provided clinical training for health care professionals through its major affiliate, Baylor College of Medicine (BCM). BCM ranked 10th among the 125 U.S. medical schools in an annual survey published by U.S. News & World Report, moving up three positions from its 13th ranking last year.
- Jul 2006 VA's model system of electronic health records, developed with extensive involvement of front-line health-care providers, won the prestigious "Innovations in American Government Award." The annual award, sponsored by Harvard University's Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the Kennedy School of Government and administered in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government, honors excellence and creativity in the public sector.
- Aug 2006 The American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists selected the MEDVAMC Pharmacy Section for its Executive Vice President's Award for Courageous Service in recognition of activities during and after Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma in 2005.
- Sep 2006 The medical knowledge company, Best Doctors, Inc. included 80 physicians who provide patient care at the MEDVAMC in the latest compilation of The Best Doctors in America[®] database.

- Sep 2006 The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) granted a six-year accreditation to the Pharmacy Practice Residency Program at the MEDVAMC.
- Sep 2006 MEDVAMC awarded a three-year CARF accreditation for its Rehabilitation Care Line's Comprehensive Integrated Inpatient Rehabilitation Program (CIIRP) and Spinal Cord Injury Care Line.
- Jan 2007 MEDVAMC received praise from the VA Continuous Improvement in Cardiac Surgery Program (CICSP) for decreasing its already exceptionally low cardiac surgery mortality rate despite increased patient load caused by the 2005 hurricanes.
- Jan 2007 MEDVAMC received recognition from the Department of Veterans Affairs Inpatient Evaluation Center (IPEC) for having a significantly low standardized mortality rate (SMR) in its Surgical Intensive Care unit for fiscal years 2005 and 2006.
- Feb 2007 MEDVAMC medical laboratory awarded re-accreditation by the Commission on Laboratory Accreditation of the College of American Pathologists (CAP).
- Jun 2007 The National Cancer Institute awarded Baylor College of Medicine official designation as a cancer center, a recognition that brings increased funding and prestige. There are 63 such centers in the nation, but only three in Texas. As a key affiliate of Baylor, the MEDVAMC will play a major role in future cancer research and treatment.
- Jun 2007 The Commission on Cancer of the American College of Surgeons granted a three-year approval award with commendation to the cancer program at the MEDVAMC.
- Jun 2007 VA announced it renewed funding for the Houston Center for Quality of Care and Utilization Studies (HCQCUS), a VA Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D) Center of Excellence, for another five years.
- Oct 2007 The VA Secretary selected the MEDVAMC to receive the Robert W. Carey Circle of Excellence Quality Award - the VA top award for quality achievement.
- Dec 2007 The medical knowledge company, Best Doctors, Inc. included 73 physicians who provide patient care at the MEDVAMC in the latest compilation of The Best Doctors in America[®] database. This includes 27 staff physicians and 46 consultants and attending physicians.
- Feb 2008 Dietetic internship program at MEDVAMC granted re-accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education, based on the results of a recent on-site inspection.
- Feb 2008 MEDVAMC again awarded a full three-year term of accreditation for its radiation oncology services as the result of a recent survey by the American College of Radiology, only program in the state of Texas to receive this accreditation.
- Jun 2008 MEDVAMC achieved re-accreditation from The Joint Commission as a result of its demonstrated compliance with the organization's nationally recognized health care standards. The Joint Commission's on-site survey of the MEDVAMC and its outpatient clinics occurred April 7 – 11, 2008.
- Jul 2008 MEDVAMC featured in an educational video produced by The Joint Commission, the nation's predominant standards-setting and accrediting health care organization. The film focuses on the MEDVAMC's top-to-bottom emphasis on preventing the spread of infections, particularly MRSA.
- Oct 2008 MEDVAMC earned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's prestigious ENERGY STAR, the national symbol for superior energy efficiency and environmental protection, becoming only one of two hospitals in Houston with this designation.
- Nov 2008 The laboratory at the MEDVAMC awarded accreditation by the Commission on Laboratory Accreditation of the College of American Pathologists, based on the result of an on-site inspection.

- Dec 2008 The medical knowledge company, Best Doctors, Inc. included 66 physicians who provide patient care at the MEDVAMC in the latest compilation of The Best Doctors in America[®] database. This includes 28 staff physicians and 38 consultants and attending physicians.
- Dec 2008 The MEDVAMC awarded a three-year certification by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities for its Health Care for Homeless Veterans and Vocational Rehabilitation programs.
- Dec 2008 The Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs, Inc. (AAHRPP) had awarded full accreditation to the MEDVAMC.
- Jan 2009 The American Nurses Credentialing Center, the nation's leading nursing credentialing organization, again granted its Magnet Recognition for Excellence in Nursing Services to the MEDVAMC. The MEDVAMC is only the second VA medical center in the nation to achieve this recognition, and remains in the group of fellow Texas Medical Center facilities with Magnet status, The Methodist Hospital, St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, Texas Children's Hospital, and The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center.
- Feb 2009 MEDVAMC again recognized for demonstrating consistently low observed-to-expected mortality rates in general surgery, all surgery, and all non-cardiac surgery.
- Mar 2009 VA National Center for Patient Safety awarded the Root Cause Analysis Bronze Cornerstone Recognition Award for completion of all root cause analyses within 45 days during fiscal year 2008.
- Jul 2009 MEDVAMC was notified it had been selected as a VA Epilepsy Center of Excellence.
- Sep 2009 MEDVAMC awarded three-year accreditations by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities for both its Spinal Cord Injury and Rehabilitation Medicine Programs.
- Oct 2009 MEDVAMC designated again as one of the Best Workplaces for Commuters by the Houston-Galveston Area Council. In addition, the Council recognized the MEDVAMC as a 2009 Clean Air Champion.
- Dec 2009 The medical knowledge company, Best Doctors, Inc. included 78 physicians who provide patient care at the MEDVAMC in the latest compilation of The Best Doctors in America[®] database.
- Dec 2009 The VA National Center for Patient Safety recently awarded the Root Cause Analysis Bronze Cornerstone Recognition Award to the MEDVAMC for completion of all root cause analyses within 45 days during fiscal year 2009, the second year in a row.
- Dec 2009 The Health Call Center, known as the VA Network Telecare Center, at the MEDVAMC was awarded full accreditation from URAC, a health care-accrediting organization that establishes quality standards for the health care industry.
- Dec 2009 The Green Building Initiative[™] awarded three Green Globes[™] to the MEDVAMC for leadership in energy and environmental efficiency.
- Jan 2010 The MEDVAMC recognized for demonstrating consistently low observed-to-expected mortality rates in general surgery, all surgery, and all non-cardiac surgery nine years straight.
- Feb 2010 MEDVAMC earned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's prestigious ENERGY STAR, the national symbol for superior energy efficiency and environmental protection.
- Nov 2010 MEDVAMC awarded 2 year accreditation from the American Association of Blood Banks.
- Feb 2011 MEDVAMC Pathology and Laboratory Medicine awarded accreditation by the Accreditation Committee of the College of American Pathologists (CAP).
- Feb 2011 MEDVAMC's Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center awarded 3 year accreditation by Commission on Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission (CARF).

- Feb 2011 MEDVAMC earned the Gold Seal of Approval™ from The Joint Commission as an Advanced Primary Stroke Center. MEDVAMC is the first VA medical center with this designation.
- Apr 2011 MEDVAMC awarded 3-year Joint Commission Accreditation for Hospital, Behavioral Health, Home Care and Long Term Care programs.
- Jun 2011 The Echocardiography Laboratory in the Cardiology Clinic selected by students at Alvin Community College as their “Favorite Clinical Site for 2011.”
- Sep 2011 The Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program at the MEDVAMC received the prestigious Torchbearer Award from the Houston Chapter of the Texas Association of Addiction Professionals.
- Feb 2012 MEDVAMC’s Health Care for Homeless Veterans, Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans, and Vocational Rehabilitation Programs awarded 3-year accreditation by Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.
- Apr 2012 MEDVAMC received a \$10,000 grant from the Lance Armstrong Foundation to enhance quality of life for Veterans with cancer.
- May 2012 MEDVAMC awarded specialty accreditation by the American Psychological Association (APA) Commission on Accreditation for its Clinical Neuropsychology Postdoctoral Program. The MEDVAMC Clinical Neuropsychology Fellowship is one of only 18 APA specialty, accredited Clinical Neuropsychology Fellowships.
- May 2012 Recently, Baylor College of Medicine selected its outstanding educators for 2012. These faculty members included 15 physicians from the MEDVAMC.
- Sep 2012 The Good Samaritan Foundation selected 7 nurses from the MEDVAMC to receive annual Excellence in Nursing Awards.
- Aug 2012 U.S. News & World Report included 49 physicians who provide patient care at the MEDVAMC on its Top Doctors list. Physicians on this list are determined to be in the top 10% in their region. In addition, 9 physicians from the MEDVAMC on this list are, in Castle Connolly’s estimation, among the top 1% in the nation in his or her specialty.
- Sep 2012 CARF awarded a 3-year re-accreditation of the Comprehensive Integrated Inpatient Rehabilitation Program and an initial, three-year accreditation of the Inpatient and Outpatient Amputee System of Care Program.

Medical & Research Advances

- Jul 2002 MEDVAMC physicians tested an innovative gene therapy designed to grow new blood vessels in the hearts of patients with blocked coronary arteries. The VA doctors were part of an international team of heart specialists testing the new therapy in about 600 patients at more than 50 sites.
- 2003 MEDVAMC vascular surgeons began treating patients with a new, minimally invasive Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm procedure, called “endovascular stent grafting.” In an effort to evaluate the best treatment options for patients with life-threatening aneurysms involving the thoracic (chest) aorta, the body’s largest artery, MEDVAMC in conjunction with Baylor College of Medicine and the Methodist Hospital participated in an FDA-approved clinical trial of a thoracic stent graft system. Trial was limited to 35 sites across the country and MEDVAMC is the only participating VA facility. MEDVAMC doctors also performed a new procedure to prevent strokes. This technique involves the application of balloon angioplasty and stenting of the neck artery, also known as the carotid artery. MEDVAMC was among first hospitals in the country to use cryoplasty to open clogged leg arteries and improve blood flow to the lower extremities.

- 2003 MEDVAMC was one of only 30 sites in North America, and the only one in Texas, to implant a cardiac support device (like a net) around the hearts of patients with congestive heart failure. The objective of the cardiac support device is to support the lower chambers of the heart in a way that effectively reduces the muscle stretch and wall stress resulting from the heart enlarging. MEDVAMC physicians hope this cardiac support device might halt the progressive enlargement of the heart, improve its function, and encourage a reduction in size.
- 2004 MEDVAMC selected as one of nine VA medical facilities in the United States to participate in a cooperative study examining radial artery versus saphenous vein grafts in coronary artery bypass grafting.
- Oct 2004 MEDVAMC completed recruitment for the VA Cooperative Study, "A Comparison of Best Medical Therapy and Deep Brain Stimulation of Subthalamic Nucleus and Globus Pallidus for the Treatment of Parkinson's Disease." The Houston Parkinson's Disease Research, Education and Clinical Center is leading this multi-VA medical center study. MEDVAMC researchers believe the electrical signals may relieve Parkinson's disease symptoms by blocking incorrect messages processed by the brain in areas that control movement.
- Dec 2004 For the first time, scientists examined the complex causes of acute illness affecting the stomach and intestinal tract and identified the most effective prevention methods. Most intriguing, the research finds no apparent benefit from the popular and commonly used antibacterial soaps. The study, conducted in part by a MEDVAMC physician, appears in the Dec. 2 *New England Journal of Medicine*.
- Dec 2004 Two preliminary clinical trials lead by a MEDVAMC physician surprisingly indicated that introducing certain types of bacteria into the bladder could actually prevent catheter-related urinary tract infection. Prompted by this initial success, VA investigators conduct a National Institutes of Health-sponsored multi-center clinical trial to confirm the effectiveness and safety of this approach in patients with spinal cord injury.
- Jan 2005 MEDVAMC researchers published a study in the American Gastroenterological Association journal *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology*, establishing that chronic users of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs have an increased risk of bleeding and visible damage to their small intestine.
- May 2005 MEDVAMC established a Stroke Center to ensure Veterans receive timely evaluation with diagnostic procedures and appropriate therapies based on guidelines established by the Stroke Council of the American Heart Association. The vital link in the operations is the Acute Stroke Team, comprised of neurology residents and staff, a neurology nurse practitioner, emergency room physicians and nurses, radiologist and technicians, laboratory technicians, and medical consultants from neuroradiology, vascular surgery, cardiology and internal medicine.
- Jan 2006 MEDVAMC among the first VA hospitals in the country to close a Patent Foramen Ovale (PFO) using a catheter-based procedure.
- Apr 2006 MEDVAMC is one of the few medical facilities in the country performing minimally invasive heart valve surgery. In this new procedure, surgery is performed with a limited split of the sternum through a small three inch incision providing a small but adequate access to the heart valves.
- Nov 2006 MEDVAMC began offering Balloon Kyphoplasty, a minimally invasive treatment option for patients suffering from spinal fractures due to osteoporosis.
- Jan 2007 MEDVAMC is the first VA hospital to perform laparoscopic Radiofrequency Catheter Ablation to treat a primary liver tumor (hepatocellular carcinoma).
- May 2007 MEDVAMC is the first hospital in Texas Medical Center and among the first VA hospitals in the country to use an innovative, catheter-based technology based on color to assess and treat coronary artery disease.
- Jun 2007 Researchers at the MEDVAMC found medical treatment for stroke seems overall to be just as effective as more invasive procedures using intra-arterial catheters. The review appeared in the June 12, 2007 issue of *Neurology*.
- Jan 2008 MEDVAMC performs complex surgery for intractable epilepsy.

- Jan 2008 Health care providers at MEDVAMC use Botox®, a therapeutic botulinum toxin, an ultra purified neurotoxin, to treat severe muscle spasms.
- Jul 2008 MEDVAMC staff physician is one of the inventors of an innovative antibacterial envelope for surgical implants.
- Nov 2008 A cardiovascular team at the MEDVAMC used their expertise, teamwork, and the latest cutting-edge technology to repair an ascending aortic pseudo-aneurysm, a rare, life-threatening medical condition.
- Mar 2009 With a two-year, nearly \$4.5 million contract from the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, a consortium of researchers led by the MEDVAMC and its major affiliate Baylor College of Medicine is tackling a project to create and develop “fracture putty,” a new material that speeds the healing of bone in severe fractures.
- Apr 2009 MEDVAMC surgeons now use a micro-invasive alternative, percutaneous endovascular surgery, for the repair of abdominal aortic aneurysms.
- May 2009 MEDVAMC researchers have addressed the potential impact of research on the comparative effectiveness of drugs, medical devices, surgical procedures, and other treatments for various conditions in a major medical journal. Though controversial, the broad consensus is that although the amount of funding the federal government provides for research is already large, the translation of this investment into practice, enabling new laboratory discoveries to reach patients' bedsides, is frustratingly slow.
- Jul 2009 Surgeons at the MEDVAMC now offer a minimally invasive surgical treatment, video-assisted lobectomy, for veterans with early-stage lung cancer.
- Jan 2010 In a study published in January 7, 2010 issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine*, researchers from four VA and two non-VA hospitals found preoperative cleansing of patients' skin with chlorhexidine-alcohol is superior to cleansing with povidone-iodine for preventing surgical-site infection. The principle researcher for the paper was a MEDVAMC physician.
- Mar 2010 In a study published March 9, 2010 in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, MEDVAMC researchers found aggressive behavior in patients with recent-onset dementia is closely linked with pain, caregiver burden, and declining quality of the caregiver-patient relationship.
- Mar 2010 In a study published March 2010 in *The Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, MEDVAMC researchers reported results of research underscoring the importance of effectively treating aggression in individuals with dementia.
- May 2010 A new study by MEDVAMC researchers shows intra-abdominal fat can predict a pancreatic cancer patient's chances of survival. The more visceral fat, or the fat located inside the belly, the worse a patient's chances for survival.
- May 2010 According to a study by MEDVAMC, a patient's waist circumference can serve as a predictor as to whether the patient will experience complications in recovering from rectal cancer surgery.
- May 2010 A diagnostic tool to detect heart attacks using a person's saliva is being tested at the MEDVAMC through a collaboration with Baylor College of Medicine and researchers at Rice University's BioScience Research Collaborative.
- Aug 2010 Cancer treatment experts at the MEDVAMC recently combined two unique procedures to successfully treat a 58-year-old Veteran suffering from life-threatening liver cancer: liver resection, the surgical removal of a portion of his liver, and a portal vein embolization.
- Sep 2010 Results of a MEDVAMC study reported in the September issue of *the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* suggest that Veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have a greater risk for dementia than Veterans without PTSD, even those who suffered traumatic injuries.

- Jul 2011 MEDVAMC selected as an enrollment site for The Million Veteran Program (MVP): A Partnership with Veterans. MVP is a national research program to study how genes affect health and illness, with the goal of improving health care for Veterans.
- Aug 2011 Surgeons at the MEDVAMC performed complex aneurysm surgery using a special stent configuration to save the life of a 76-year-old, Air Force Veteran suffering from complex aortoiliac aneurysm. This was the first patient to receive branched stent-graft in Texas Medical Center.
- Aug 2011 Surgeons at the MEDVAMC performed an emergency, contained ruptured aneurysm fenestrated graft repair using a special stent configuration to save the life of an 82-year-old, Army Veteran. This was the first time contained ruptured aneurysm fenestrated graft repair performed in Texas.
- Nov 2011 Cancer experts at the MEDVAMC successfully treated a patient's liver cancer using a medically advanced, fully laparoscopic, anatomic liver resection technique.
- Nov 2011 A new medical study currently being conducted at the MEDVAMC uses functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging to learn how deployment affects the brain and to improve treatment of PTSD.
- Dec 2011 As a result of a \$1.2 million award from the National Institutes of Health, the MEDVAMC initiated a pilot study of a novel device to determine its ability to reduce bacterial contamination and decrease the incidence of surgical site infection after surgical procedures requiring insertion of prostheses.
- Dec 2011 MEDVAMC selected as a Women's Health Practice-Based Research Network Member Site by VA.
- May 2012 MEDVAMC added a new intra-operative hormone test along with equipment and supplies for parathyroid surgery patients.
- May 2012 Using advanced, minimally invasive techniques, the MEDVAMC Pulmonary Department offers a new Interventional Pulmonology Service to treat Veterans with respiratory problems.
- Oct 2012 The Houston Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D) at the MEDVAMC was selected by the Department of Veterans Affairs as one of six sites for a Collaborative Research to Enhance and Advance Transformation and Excellence (CREATE) initiative, worth \$4.3 million.

Technological Advances

The VA began using its own electronic patient record system in the early 1980s. CPRS is by far the most advanced electronic medical records system in the U.S. Every one of the VA's facilities is linked to the national database, and every patient protocol and interaction is recorded. The resulting efficiencies and error reductions have more than covered the cost of implementing CPRS. Also, the VA now has the data in hand to determine how well we are meeting our quality benchmarks. CPRS offers health care providers a complete electronic record covering all aspects of patient care, including reminders for preventive health care, electronic entry of pharmaceutical orders, display of laboratory results, consultation requests, X-rays, and pathology slides. The importance of this system was demonstrated after Hurricane Katrina. Medical information for every New Orleans VA patient was available at any VA medical center and by any VA physician nationwide.

Bar Code Medication Administration was piloted by field staff at the Topeka VA Medical Center in Kansas in 1994. In 1999, it was rolled out to 60,000 beds at all 172 VA medical centers. In 2003, 100% of all VA inpatient wards were using BCMA to document medication administration. Administering medications, a significant component of delivering quality care, is a complex process, and previously, primarily paper-based. A breakdown at any step along the way could compromise patient safety. The BCMA process consists of using a scanner, very similar to devices in supermarkets, to scan a patient's hospital identification band, and then scan the medications the patient is supposed to receive. This allows the health care provider to make sure a Veteran receives the correct medication, the correct dose at the correct time.

- 2003 MEDVAMC spent approximately \$8.86 million dollars to purchase or replace equipment in the facility. The total value of all facility equipment is more than \$47 million.
- 2004 Both Lufkin and Beaumont VA Outpatient Clinics installed new machines to enable their laboratories to perform several types of blood tests in-house. This now means same day results for Veterans and health care providers at the clinics.
- 2004 MEDVAMC completed installation of Automated External Defibrillators throughout the hospital and its outpatient clinics in Beaumont and Lufkin. This made MEDVAMC one of the first hospitals in the city of Houston to have such a program in place in compliance with recommendations of the American Heart Association and the International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation.
- 2004 MEDVAMC installed the Picture Archiving and Communications System and now has a filmless radiology.
- 2004 MEDVAMC installed robotic helpmates and was the only hospital in the Houston area to have these machines. These robotic couriers, or helpmates, transport medications and supplies from the pharmacy to various nursing units within the hospital, decreasing the time-consuming errands nurses now run.
- 2004 Both Lufkin and Beaumont VA Outpatient Clinics installed ScriptPro 200 Robotic Prescription Dispensing Systems to perform the time consuming and tedious tasks of counting, filling, and labeling prescriptions, allowing staff to spend more time with customers. The "200" in the name indicates the system is designed to dispense the 200 medications "most-filled" in the clinics' pharmacies.
- Aug 2004 MEDVAMC opened a new state-of-the-art cardiac intervention laboratory. The lab incorporated a technologically advanced x-ray system for capturing and viewing detailed images of a patient's coronary structure. Physicians are now able to use this equipment to work inside and near the heart and in other major arteries, making diagnoses, opening blocked vessels, and dissolving or fragmenting blood clots. A key component of the new lab is flat detector technology, offering sharper, more detailed x-ray images. This equipment speeds diagnoses, reduces radiation dose, and provides faster imaging times. It is fully digital and plays an important role in offering heart patients a safe and effective alternative to surgery. The new x-ray system works alongside an innovative image storage system, which allows for rapid retrieval and viewing of previous cardiac catheterization results from key areas in the hospital such as the Cardiac Care Unit and the Surgical Intensive Care Unit. These images can also be exchanged via special Intranet connections with other VA medical facilities providing opportunities for consultation at a distance.
- Oct 2004 MEDVAMC installed ceiling-mounted patient lifts for 40 beds on its Spinal Cord Injury Unit and 127 beds on its Transitional Care Center. In addition, one was installed to assist in the Urodynamic Lab.
- 2005 In the Chemistry, Hematology, and Immunology Labs, new automated, state-of-the art power processor robotics saved numerous man hours, providing results 30 - 45 minutes faster, and ensuring more accurate readings for patient treatment. This system also improved safety for both employees and Veterans. All vials are bar-coded and read numerous times during the processing cycle.
- 2005 Serving more than 1,000 blind Veterans in southeast Texas, the MEDVAMC Visual Impairment Service Team hired a new outpatient rehabilitation specialist who has trained approximately 175 legally blind Veterans. This training includes the innovative ScripTalk™ prescription reader, the state-of-the-art I.D. Mate™ device, and the advanced SARA™ (Scanning and Reading Appliance) device to read print aloud.
- May 2005 MEDVAMC first VA hospital to use FDA-approved endovascular device to treat thoracic aorta aneurysms.
- Aug 2005 Veteran inpatients at the MEDVAMC now able to talk with their nurses anywhere, anytime simply by using a newly installed and enhanced nurse call system. As part of this enhanced nurse call system to increase patient safety and satisfaction, nurses are equipped with mobile telephones. The new system is being piloted on the Spinal Cord Injury Unit where inpatients are most dependent.
- Jul 2005 MEDVAMC, in collaboration with the Anesthesiology Department of Baylor College of Medicine, only VA facility in Texas to offer hands-on learning experience and true-to-life scenario training to its anesthesia residents, interns, student registered nurse anesthetists, and medical students using a high fidelity computer-model-driven, full-sized mannequin called the Human Patient Simulator.

- Oct 2005 Veterans receiving their health care at the MEDVAMC or any one of its outpatient clinics may now order prescription refills and check the status of prescription refills on the Internet.
- Nov 2005 MEDVAMC among the first VA hospitals in the country to use Radiofrequency Catheter Ablation to treat liver cancer and tumors.
- Nov 2005 MEDVAMC first VA hospital to implant a cutting-edge, FDA-approved wireless pressure sensor to monitor aortic aneurysm pressure in patients undergoing endovascular aortic aneurysm repair.
- Aug 2006 MEDVAMC first VA medical center to fit a patient with the Proprio "Bionic" Foot™, just weeks after Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio and Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. This technologically advanced prosthesis thinks for itself, responding automatically to changing terrain, stairs, slopes, and level-ground walking as needed.
- Sep 2006 MEDVAMC first VA medical center in the country to use Intracardiac Echocardiography (ICE) to diagnose and treat Veterans needing specialized cardiac care.
- Oct 2006 Unique prosthetic stubby swim legs, made by the MEDVAMC, allowed a Veteran to regain his sense of independence and freedom, while enjoying a hobby he thought he lost. "Swim Stubbies" have rarely been made; however, a pair was fabricated by the MEDVAMC to fit this Veteran's specific needs and abilities.
- Jan 2007 A new, state-of-the-art hybrid surgical suite opened at the MEDVAMC. This new operating room combines endovascular, cardiac catheterization, cardiac surgical, laparoscopic, and radiological capabilities, allowing maximum flexibility and speed in the treatment of patients with even the most complex cardiac and vascular conditions.
- Feb 2007 MEDVAMC first hospital in Houston and among the first VA hospitals in the country to use an innovative, minimally invasive, video-assisted surgical technique to treat atrial fibrillation.
- Feb 2007 MEDVAMC initiated clinical use of a surgical robotic system to perform minimally invasive urological operations, including the removal of cancerous prostate glands.
- Apr 2007 As part of its fight against Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), MEDVAMC is the first hospital in Texas and in the VA to install a computerized system able to integrate all the steps required for surveillance MRSA testing: sample preparation, amplification, and detection.
- May 2007 At the MEDVAMC, patients too ill to survive heart surgery can now be treated with a new device designed for those with the sickest of hearts. The TandemHeart® is a small, left ventricular assist device for patients with extremely poor heart function.
- Oct 2007 Always at the forefront of innovative treatments and technologies, the MEDVAMC recently purchased the CyberKnife®, a robotic radiosurgery system, providing Veterans a targeted, painless alternative to open surgery and a medical option for certain tumors that are inoperable.
- Nov 2007 MEDVAMC now offers its patients a powerful new diagnostic imaging system known as PET/CT. This hybrid technology combines the strengths of two well-established imaging modalities in one imaging session to more accurately diagnose and locate cancers while increasing patient comfort.
- Nov 2007 MEDVAMC now offers a hands-on learning experience and true-to-life scenario training to its ophthalmology residents using a highly sophisticated simulator for intraocular surgical training.
- Nov 2007 MEDVAMC began clinical use of the latest technology in computed tomography (CT) imaging software and machinery, a 64-slice CT scanner.
- May 2008 MEDVAMC incorporated a popular video game system, the Nintendo® Wii™, into its traditional physical rehabilitation program. This new tactic helps in masking the often painful and tedious rehabilitation process

and increases a patient's motivation and enthusiasm to continue therapy.

- Jun 2008 MEDVAMC dentists are giving Veterans new smiles in a single sitting thanks to the latest in computer-design technology. With computer-aided design/computer-aided manufacturing (CAD/CAM) technology, combining advanced software and milling units, MEDVAMC dentists are able to prepare, fit, and permanently cement a dental crown for a patient in a single appointment.
- Nov 2008 The MEDVAMC's latest breakthrough for Veterans with visual disturbance caused by TBI is the use of specialized prism eyeglasses to retrain the brain to treat hemispatial neglect.
- Mar 2009 Veterans with chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and heart failure can now be monitored at home using special telehealth technologies provided to them by the MEDVAMC.
- Apr 2009 One of the first VA hospitals to take advantage of new microwave technology, MEDVAMC physicians now use the Evident™ microwave ablation system, a powerful new tool with industry-leading microwave technology to ablate soft tissue and effectively treat liver cancer and tumors.
- Jul 2009 MEDVAMC initiated clinical use of a surgical robotic system to perform minimally invasive gynecological operations, including minimally invasive hysterectomies.
- Jan 2010 MEDVAMC is home to a new Varian Trilogy linear accelerator, considered one of the most versatile cancer treatment devices available in the field of radiation therapy.
- May 2010 MEDVAMC installed a computerized, operating room control system, called OR•Control, to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of day-of-surgery operations by directly coordinating and supporting surgeons, anesthesiologists, nurses, patients, family members, and related support personnel and activities.
- June 2010 MEDVAMC enhanced its radiation therapy program by introducing the Philips Wide Bore Computed Tomography Simulator.
- Feb 2011 MEDVAMC became the first VA medical center to fit a patient with the iWalk PowerFoot BIOM™, just weeks after Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio and Walter Reed in Washington, D.C. This technologically advanced prosthesis is the world's first bionic lower leg system to replace the action of the foot, Achilles tendon, and calf muscle and offer a near normalized gait for amputees.
- Sep 2011 Patients of the MEDVAMC who live far away have better options when it comes to medical care thanks to a new telemedicine program being used in its Anesthesiology Pre-Operative Evaluation Clinic.
- Oct 2011 MEDVAMC began use of the Abiomed Impella 2.5 catheter-based heart pump, considered to be the smallest heart pump in the world.
- Dec 2011 MEDVAMC is the first VA to implant an innovative artificial heart valve, the Sapien heart valve made by Edwards Lifesciences, recently approved by the Food and Drug Administration.
- Jan 2012 MEDVAMC added an EquiTest System to its arsenal of rehabilitation equipment. This 'computerized posturography' machine measures a patient's responses to movement of the platform, then provides computer-generated assessments of the patient's postural alignment and stability.
- Dec 2012 MEDVAMC is one of the first VA hospitals to now offer innovative robotic cardiac catheterization technology for patients suffering from abnormal heart rhythms or arrhythmias.