Words cannot express our gratitude to our employees, volunteers, donors, and other supporters. You have made VNA Care’s pandemic response possible and, as we adapt to the “new normal,” you are helping us lead the way in a new era for home health and hospice care.

As the danger of the coronavirus emerged, our organization quickly pulled together a comprehensive plan to meet the needs of patients with COVID-19 as well as the many other patients with chronic or serious conditions who were especially at risk. Among the initiatives that we undertook early in the pandemic were:

• **Substantial shift of resources** to educate employees and design new care models

• **Launch of an Emergency Response Fund** for the purchase of personal protective equipment and support of patient care needs

• **Addition of treatments and services** to meet the needs of patients normally seen at a hospital or outpatient clinic

• **Rapid expansion of telemedicine** to promote the health and well-being of patients between in-person visits while also conserving personal protective equipment

COVID-19 caused many people to delay seeking medical care, and today our clinicians are caring for patients who are much sicker than we have ever seen before. Their expertise and boundless compassion are making a difference in people’s lives across the state.

We have heard so many stories about the ways our clinicians have gone above and beyond. One physical therapist conducted her visit standing on a box outside the window of a patient who was afraid to let anyone in her home. A nurse provided education about preventing the spread of the coronavirus to homeless shelter residents.

So many of our hospice clinicians have stood in for families who could not be with a loved one as they passed away, providing great comfort during such a difficult time.

While we try to figure out what life may look like in the “new normal,” we see VNA Care’s home health, palliative, and hospice care taking an even more prominent place in health care. Our clinicians have proven day after day throughout the pandemic that it’s possible to help people with incredibly complex conditions remain where they most want to be – safe at home. We look forward to furthering our collaborations with doctors, hospitals, and other health care providers.

Your continued support has meant the world to our organization during this incredibly challenging time, and it is enabling us to meet growing health care needs in local communities.
Nurse reflects on caring for home health patients during the pandemic

As Massachusetts began reopening the state, Maryanne Palizzolo, RN, noticed a big change among the patients she’s caring for at home. “People are getting a little less anxious,” she said. As a visiting nurse with VNA Care for 25 years, the pandemic is probably the single biggest crisis she and her colleagues have ever faced.

As the virus first threatened the Commonwealth in March, Maryanne remembers “we had a week of everybody refusing care. I think as they were getting sicker, they decided they would let one person come in.”

That one person is most often a visiting nurse. Their role as a lifeline for people with serious health conditions grew instantaneously as doctors’ offices and clinics closed as a precaution.

Maryanne recalled one of her patients, a woman waiting for a kidney transplant. Prior to its closure, she had been visiting a clinic for weekly injections and lab work. Now she was also caring for her ailing son and petrified of getting COVID-19 because of their fragile health.

She was “extremely fearful” to let Maryanne in during the first couple of weeks. “Since that time, her lab results have been incredible. She’s doing really, really well,” said Maryanne. “This wouldn’t have happened if we weren’t there.”

Maryanne recounted other successes to celebrate during these challenging months. One was a grandmother who was COVID-19 positive. The patient’s own daughter was in the hospital with COVID-19, and the grandmother was caring for her three young grandchildren.

Initially, it seemed that the woman could remain at home, but Maryanne saw her condition quickly deteriorate. Maryanne coordinated her hospitalization and arranged for the children to stay with family.

Less than two weeks later, her patient was well enough to return home under Maryanne’s care and has since made a full recovery.

“Things definitely would have gone in a different direction if I hadn’t been visiting,” said Maryanne. “She told me that she probably wouldn’t have gone to the hospital because she didn’t realize how sick she actually was.”

Whether a patient is COVID-19 positive or facing diabetes, heart disease, or other serious condition, Maryanne finds caring for people in their own homes to be incredibly rewarding.

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Gift planning provides benefits to donors while supporting charity

Planned giving offers opportunities to make charitable gifts now or after your lifetime while enjoying financial benefits for yourself and your family.

The generosity and foresight of those who have included VNA Care in their wills and other estate plans is truly meaningful and helps us continue the important home health, palliative, and hospice care that our patients and their families rely on 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The benefits of estate planning include:

- You, not someone else, determine where your assets go. (Everyone needs an estate plan, regardless of how much you own.)
- There can frequently be tax benefits, and more of your assets can be made available for your loved ones.
- Some estate plan arrangements can guarantee an annual income for the donor for the rest of his or her life.
- With certain planned gift structures, you can ensure your gift avoids the delays and potential pitfalls of the probate process.

To learn more about planned giving and bequests, please contact Karen Webber, director of fund development, at 508-573-8027 or Laura Wise, manager of fund development, at 617-835-9654.

VNA Care’s mission is to provide the right care with kindness and compassion every day for every person we serve.

Service Information
800-521-5539
Website
www.vnacare.org
The coronavirus brought many challenges to health care providers, but the staff at VNA Hospice & Palliative Care wasn’t going to let the pandemic stand in the way of providing comfort to those facing a terminal illness.

“As nurses, it’s just what we do. Whatever obstacles, whatever is in the way of taking care of patients — we make it work. We come together as a team and community and take care of these fragile people,” said Gina Grady, RN, a hospice nurse with VNA Hospice & Palliative Care for nearly five years.

The hospice team began easing the pain and symptoms of COVID-19 patients early in the pandemic. Over the past months, Gina has cared for terminally ill individuals who are COVID-19 positive as well as patients with end-stage diseases such as cancer.

Gina’s patients included the matriarch of a large family. Although COVID-19 was not the patient’s initial reason for choosing hospice, she began showing symptoms of the virus. To help the family spend time together and reduce the risk of spreading the virus, the hospice team arranged many FaceTime visits and Zoom meetings with all six of her children. The hospice team supported the family in remaining connected, and the children had the chance to tell their mother how much she was loved.

VNA Hospice & Palliative Care’s nurses, social workers, chaplains and bereavement councilors, home health aides, physicians, and other clinicians work together to improve the quality of life at the end of life for patients and their loved ones. The team provides care in patients’ homes, assisted living and other facilities, and our three hospice homes (Elizabeth Evarts de Rham Hospice Home, Cambridge; Rose Monahan Hospice Home, Worcester; and Stanley R. Tippett Hospice Home, Needham).

Gina also cared for a mother facing terminal cancer and her son, who lived nearby and was losing his battle with COVID-19. Gina remembered it was difficult for the mother to let go without knowing her son was at peace. The mom had the chance to tell her son over the telephone, “I love you, and I’ll be seeing you.”

The hospice team helped ease the mother’s fears and said that her son just might be waiting for her to lead the way. The mother passed away peacefully followed by her son less than 24 hours later. Their family was grateful for VNA Hospice & Palliative Care’s support during such a difficult time.

Gina finds hospice to be “one of the most rewarding parts of nursing care. I love that I can focus on one patient at a time. It’s such a profound thing to be with somebody when they’re making their end-of-life journey.”
Philanthropist leaves important legacy to benefit the community

When people remember the late Genevieve Wyner, they are sure to have a heartfelt story about how she helped them that her devoted husband of 64 years, Justin Wyner, has never heard before.

“She was very special, and truly listened and responded with empathy. People saw that she understood what they were all about. She was helpful to a lot of people,” said Justin.

The Wyners devoted much of their lives together to volunteerism and philanthropy. It came as no surprise that Genevieve wanted to continue helping others through her will. VNA of Boston, part of VNA Care, was one of the recipients of her generosity and thoughtful planning.

Genevieve and Justin first came to know VNA of Boston decades ago when Genevieve was recovering at home from knee replacement surgery.

“She was a tall, athletic gal who could beat anybody at tennis with her hands behind her back. (The knee replacement) was really lifestyle challenging. There was a lot of therapy and a lot of visits,” remembered Justin.

He shared that VNA of Boston’s staff always took their time during visits and were supportive of him as well. “I think that’s what really made the difference. …It’s all a discussion, and they’re open to suggestions,” said Justin. He laughed and added, “I’m always full of suggestions.”

“With the assistance and encouragement of the wonderful people (from VNA of Boston), Genevieve worked hard. With their help, she got back to full mobility,” said Justin.

The home health clinicians made such a difference that Genevieve and Justin turned to VNA of Boston after Genevieve had additional surgeries for a second knee replacement, hip replacement, and hip revision.

Genevieve’s bequest will help VNA of Boston continue it’s 134-year-old history of caring for some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

“It was always a principal in my family and in my wife’s family that you live in a community, whether it’s the local community, whether it’s the greater community of Boston, whether it’s our synagogue community, the hospital community, or the country itself – you do your best to make it a better place for all of us to live. That was the attitude that Genevieve took and nurtured in a very demonstrable way with all of the things that she did.”

Justin and Genevieve Wyner