



11/30/2018

Association of VA Audiologists

4th Quarter

Special points of interest:

- President's message
- Opinion Piece
- Spotlight:



President's message:

Greetings at this wonderful and crazy time of year! I wanted take this opportunity to catch you up on your board's efforts to increase the value that AVAA delivers to all of you. AVAA continues to work with our sister audiology organizations to benefit audiology and veterans with several of us on the board serving on AAA, ADA, and ASHA committees. One of our big projects this year has been revamping our website, <https://myavaa.org/>, to make it more user friendly. We have incorporated issues that routinely crop up into the FAQ page; one example is how to add or remove a person from the National Listserv group. Another new initiative is a member spotlight. VA Audiologists provide excellent care to our Veterans and contribute to the profession of Audiology, and our organization should regularly highlight and celebrate those contributions! Our first Spotlight features the journey of one VA intern to extern with the San Francisco VA, Melissa Velasco.

People often wonder why we request your private email address on the website, especially when we have the Listserv available as a communication tool. As we are government employees there are restrictions on what can be said on our National Listserv, especially in areas of legislation. We want to be able to share information and updates learned from our sister organizations with the membership to keep you as informed as possible about legislation that might affect our patients and our profession. And sometimes that info can't be communicated via the Listserv. We try to blast only really important updates so you don't have to worry about your inbox being filled!

We have also been working to better promote externships. As you may have seen, AVAA is developing an externship committee in the hopes of having a page on the AVAA website devoted to VA externships. The goal is to provide a central listing where all facilities can post their externship opportunities, both funded and unfunded, so that students and universities can easily access the information and understand each facilities application process.

We welcome member input on these activities . . . and others! If you have other ideas for topics that you would like to see added to the website or a member you would like to see Spotlighted, please let us know at assnvauds@gmail.com.

AVAA belongs to its members and we are looking to promote member engagement whenever possible. Consistent with this goal, one of the other changes to the website we will be making is to allow direct voting from the field for AVAA's Honors of the Association. A call for nominations for AVAA's awards will be sent out in the very near future. Please nominate someone you know who is doing great work! Our award categories can be found on our website at: <https://myavaa.org/awards/>

It will also soon be time for our elections. This year nominations will be accepted for the office of President-Elect and Member-at-Large. Volunteering with this group has been a privilege and a pleasure as I have developed new resources, learned so much about VA, and built lifelong friendships. I hope you will consider becoming involved!

The Joint Defense Veterans Audiology Conference is just around the corner. I look forward to seeing many of you in Grapevine, TX this February, for one of the premier audiology events devoted to our Veterans and you, our members.



Evolution of a VA Audiologist: From Intern to Au.D.

My name is Melissa Velasco and I'm a clinical Audiologist at the San Francisco VA Medical Center and Santa Rosa CBOC. I started at the San Francisco VA in 2016 with a three-month internship, followed by a year externship, and then a full time Audiologist position. Unlike my other internships, my time at the San Francisco VA was very hands-on. Because this was only my second off-campus rotation, I thought my placement would be strictly observational. I was surprised (and a little nervous to be honest) that the team of audiologists encouraged me to take the lead in a variety of appointments to polish my clinical skills.

Due to the number of patients I saw on a daily basis, my clinical skills and confidence grew rapidly. Within three months, I developed my skills in diagnostics, hearing aids, and hearing aid fittings. Without the guidance and encouragement of the audiologists, this wouldn't have been possible. Their passion and commitment to the mentorship of future health care professionals solidified my decision to pursue a 4th year externship and ultimately a career with the San Francisco VA.

I did apply to other VA positions since I was not guaranteed an externship placement in San Francisco. My first challenge in the application process was trying to locate a list of VA medical centers that offered well-rounded externships. I utilized search engines such as USA JOBS to find more information about clinical services, externship requirements, and paid positions. Most listings were not comprehensive regarding the latter information.

The second challenge in the process was finding a point of contact at the various locations. This was important in order to get more information about the clinic or application deadlines. Fortunately, my mentors at the San Francisco VA were very helpful here. Not only did they provide me with contact information but also with letters of recommendation and insights about which VA centers met my requirements. I had an advantage compared to other students seeking VA externships because I had an easier means of obtaining this information.

Shortly after submitting all of my VA applications, I was offered externship at San Francisco. I accepted the externship offer without hesitation. My externship year in San Francisco was everything I could've hoped for. At our clinic we offer a variety of services such as diagnostics, hearing aids, vestibular, cochlear implants, bone anchored hearing devices, progressive tinnitus management, ABR evaluations, and telehealth audiology. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in all services and work alongside our talented team of audiologists.

All and all, I believe pursuing an externship at the VA is by far one of the best decisions I've made. Not only was my clinical experience exceptional, but the opportunity to serve our nation's heroes was the highlight of my rotation.

Spotlight on: Office of Connected Care

VA Expands Telehealth by Allowing Health Care Providers to Treat Patients Across State Lines as Part of Its 'Anywhere to Anywhere' Initiative

Last week, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced a new federal rule that will allow VA doctors, nurses and other health-care providers to administer care to Veterans using telehealth, or virtual technology, regardless of where in the United States the provider or Veteran is located, including when care will occur across state lines or outside a VA facility.

Previously, the guidelines were unclear on whether VA providers could furnish care to Veterans in other states through telehealth because of licensing restrictions or state-specific telehealth laws. This new federal rule overrides those state restrictions, paving the way for VA to expand care to Veterans using telehealth. VA worked closely with the White House Office of American Innovation and the Department of Justice for implementation of the new rule.

“This new rule is critical to VA’s ‘Anywhere to Anywhere’ initiative,” said VA Acting Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Now that the rule has been finalized, VA providers and patients can start enjoying the full benefits of VA’s telehealth services.”

By enabling Veterans nationwide to receive care at home, the rule will especially benefit Veterans living in rural areas who would otherwise need to travel a considerable distance or across state lines to receive care. The rule will also expand Veterans’ access to critical care that can be provided virtually, such as mental health care and suicide prevention, by allowing quicker and easier access to VA mental health providers through telehealth.

VA first announced the proposed rule, titled “Authority of Health Care Providers to Practice Telehealth,” at a White House event with President Trump in attendance last August 2017. In the announcement, VA also unveiled [VA Video Connect](#), a video conferencing app for Veterans and VA providers. Through this new rule, VA providers will be able to use VA Video Connect and other forms of telehealth to furnish care to Veterans anywhere in the country, including in the Veteran’s home.



Information released May 17, 2018 from the Office of Connected Care. Legislation officially passed on 6/6/2018.

Pictured is a wall mounted unit offered by Interacoustics for delivery of Tele-audiology services.