

Spinal Cord Injury Center VA Boston Healthcare System

The **mission** of the Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Center at VA Boston Health Care System is to promote the health, independence, quality of life, and productivity of Veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D) throughout their lives.

We serve Veterans and Active Duty Service Members throughout New England, and work in a hub and spoke model with designated SCI teams at other VISN1 VA facilities. One of our unique strengths is the full continuum of care for Veterans with SCI/D. Acute care, initial and ongoing rehabilitation, comprehensive specialty care, primary care, outpatient care, home care, virtual care, respite care, and long term care are all delivered in an integrated system. Services are provided in a caring environment using the latest technology.

We have organized our goals and outcomes under 5 Areas of Excellence.

I. Excellence in Population Health

Inpatient Rehabilitation:

Our comprehensive SCI rehabilitation program achieves excellent outcomes. Recent 4-year aggregate data demonstrates higher average gains in motor function overall, achieved in a shorter time, than national benchmarks (Figure 1). A Fisher House on campus enables family members to be close to their loved ones during hospitalization.

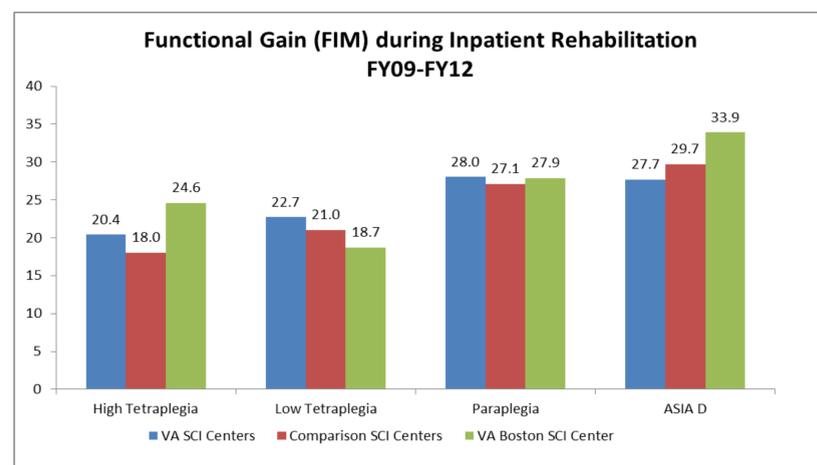


Figure 1

Outpatient and Home-Care:

We continue to enhance services to support Veterans with SCI/D in their communities. Recent initiatives include: systematically identifying and addressing caregiver burden, increasing awareness and utilization of respite services, examining a Supported Employment model to enhance vocational outcomes, offering ever-expanding adaptive sports and recreational activities, incorporating Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for SCI-related chronic pain (Figures 2, 3), and expanding virtual access with in-home video telehealth.

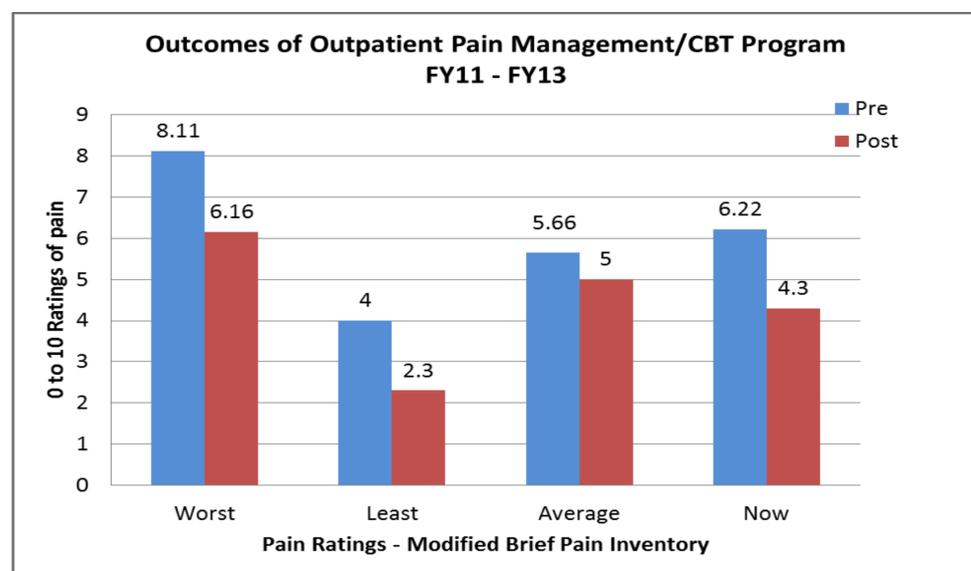


Figure 2

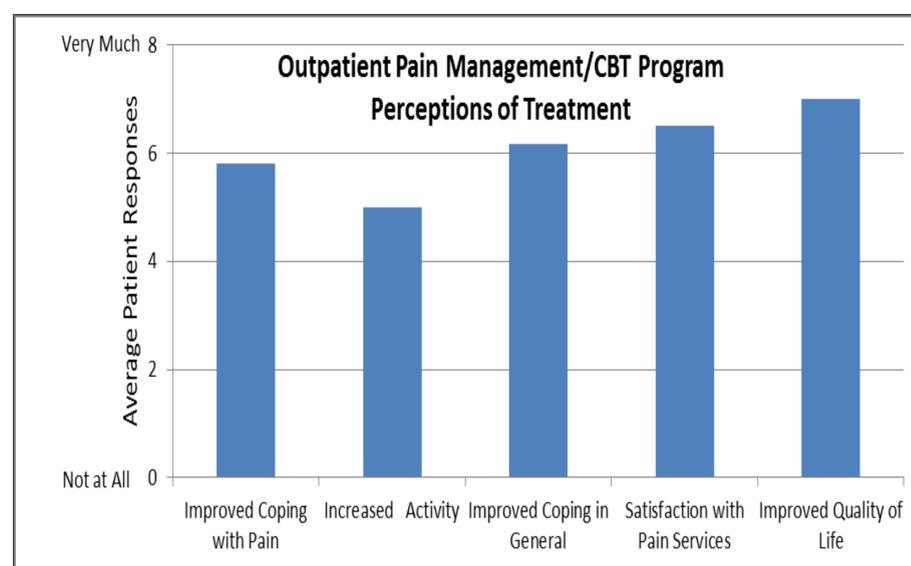


Figure 3

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Virtual Access: Figures 4 and 5 illustrate our ongoing recent growth in Home Telehealth & Secure Messaging

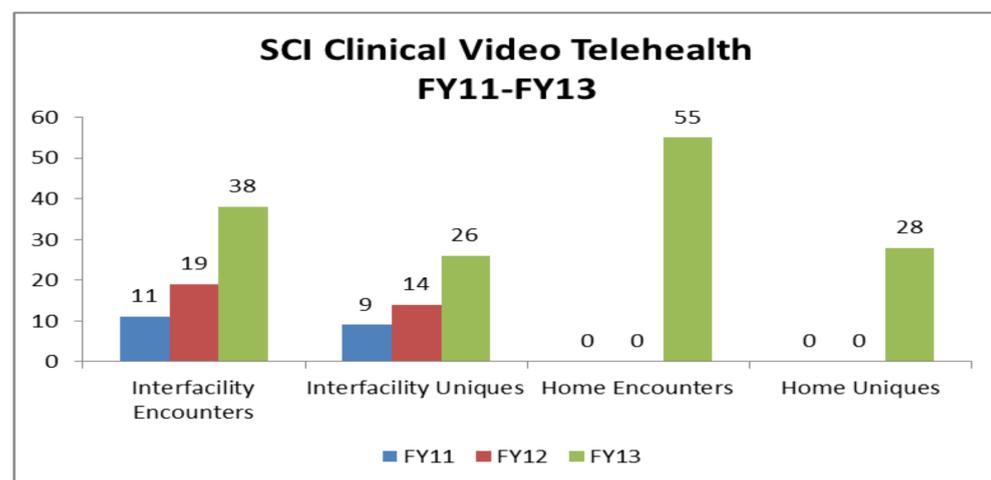


Figure 4

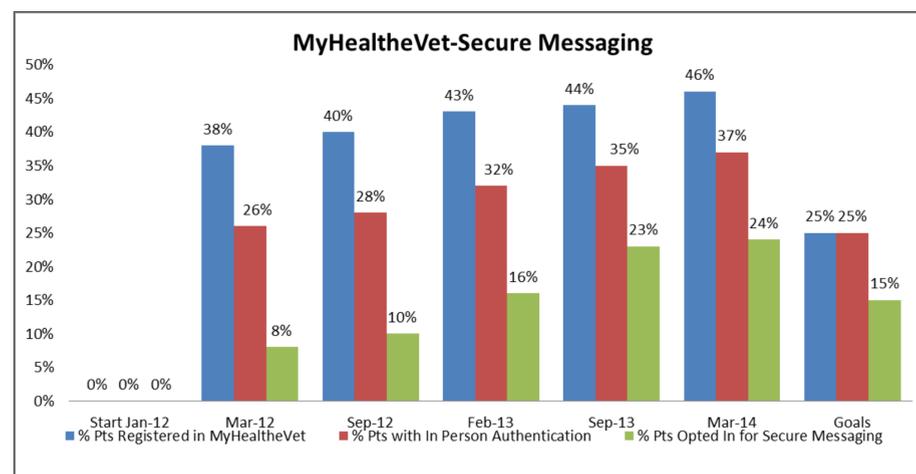


Figure 5

II. Excellence in Patient Experience

Consistently high scores in standardized satisfaction surveys (Figures 6, 7) validate the overwhelmingly positive feedback we receive from Veterans, families, and stakeholders. Ongoing initiatives to further enhance patient experience include focused staff training in communication that engages Veterans as full partners with their healthcare team, and participation in a Living History project that highlights our Veterans' remarkable experiences and service.

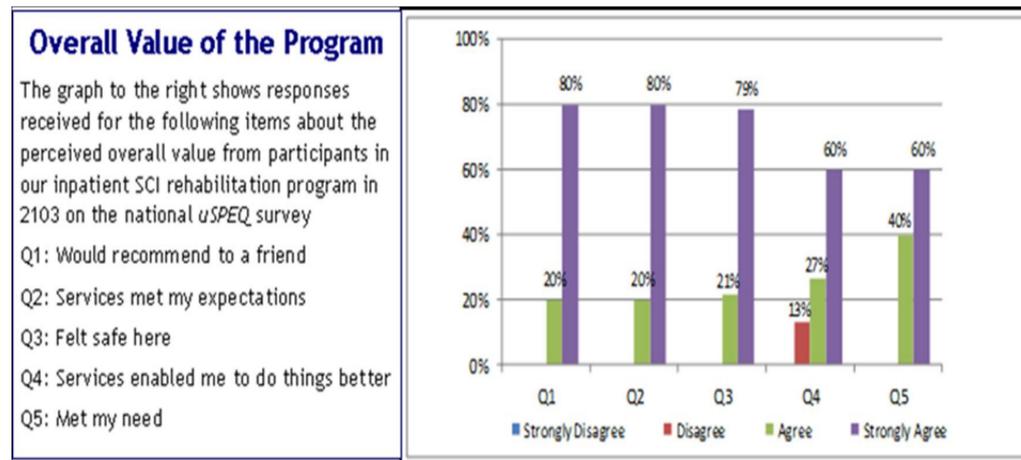


Figure 6

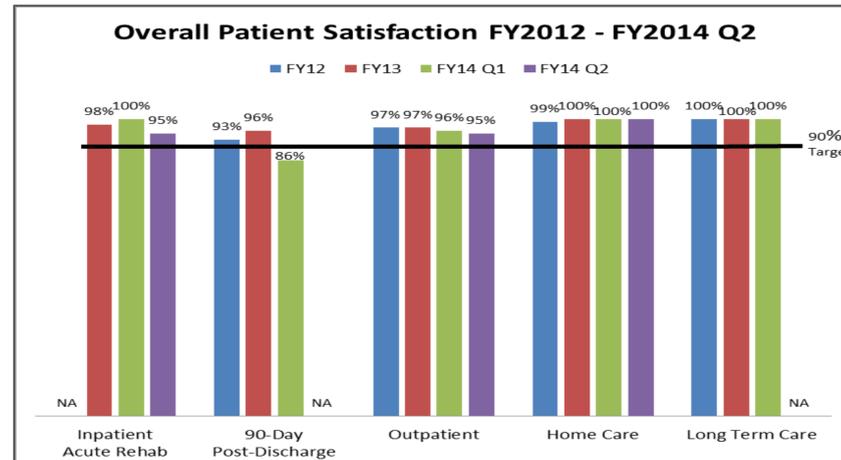


Figure 7

III. Excellence in Financial Stewardship

Efforts to facilitate outreach and awareness of our programs include quarterly newsletters (Figure 8) featuring our Veterans stories, outcomes, and program updates (see http://www.boston.va.gov/SCI_Newsletters.asp).

Measures to minimize waste and inefficiencies include significantly reduced missed opportunities from no-shows or cancelled appointments, and actions to optimize timely delivery of durable medical equipment.



Figure 8

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IV. Excellence in Workforce

Our SCI staff consistently report amongst the highest overall satisfaction in the VA All Employee Survey (Figure 9), with every domain scoring better than national or network averages.

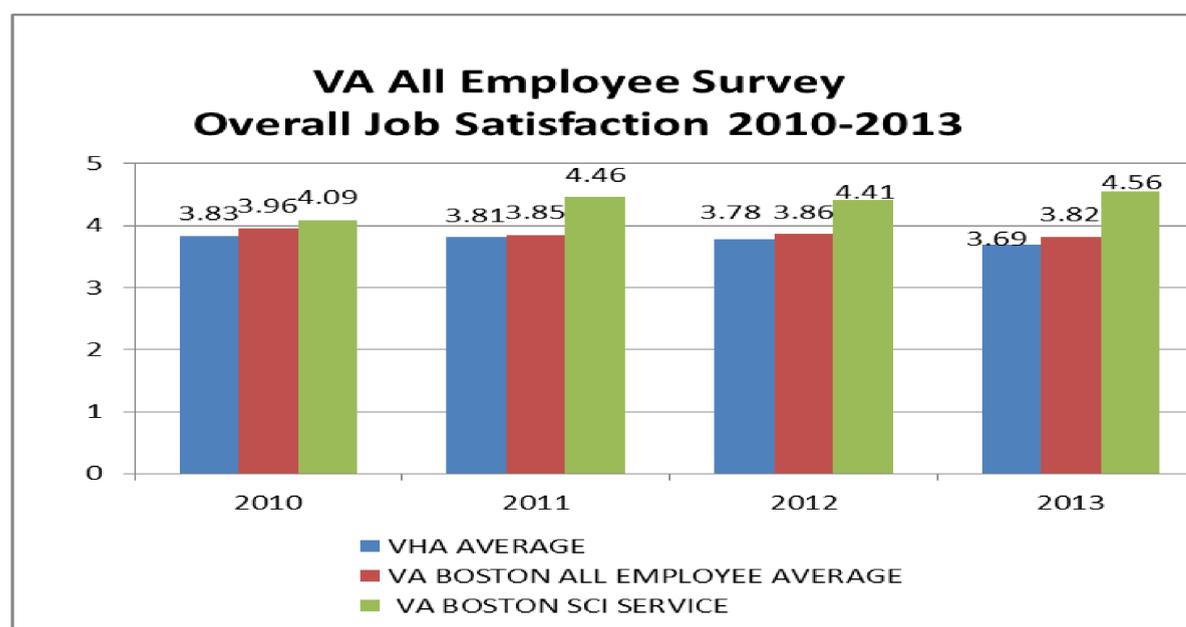


Figure 9

For further staff development as work teams engaged in continual improvement, and to fully harness staff commitment and creativity, we have begun to incorporate Systems Engineering expertise in SCI teams.

V. Excellence in Service to Our Communities

We are improving emergency preparedness and support for individuals with SCI in the community who are especially vulnerable during prolonged power outages, natural disasters and other emergencies.

We support many educational and research activities. We are the primary training site for the Harvard Medical School SCI fellowship program and the designated national hub-site for the VA Advanced Fellowship in SCI Medicine. We train residents, nursing students, psychology and social work interns, and post-doctoral fellows. Our staff regularly publishes peer-reviewed research, books and book chapters, presents at national meetings and contributes to national SCI training. We recently hosted our 13th Interdisciplinary SCI Nursing Conference and our 22nd Annual SCI Symposium for health professionals throughout New England.

We are proud of the achievements of our SCI Center, and are committed to continued excellence!

