

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans' Use of Veterans Health Administration and Purchased Care Before and After Veterans Choice Program Implementation

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- Disclosures: Authors are researchers employed by VA.

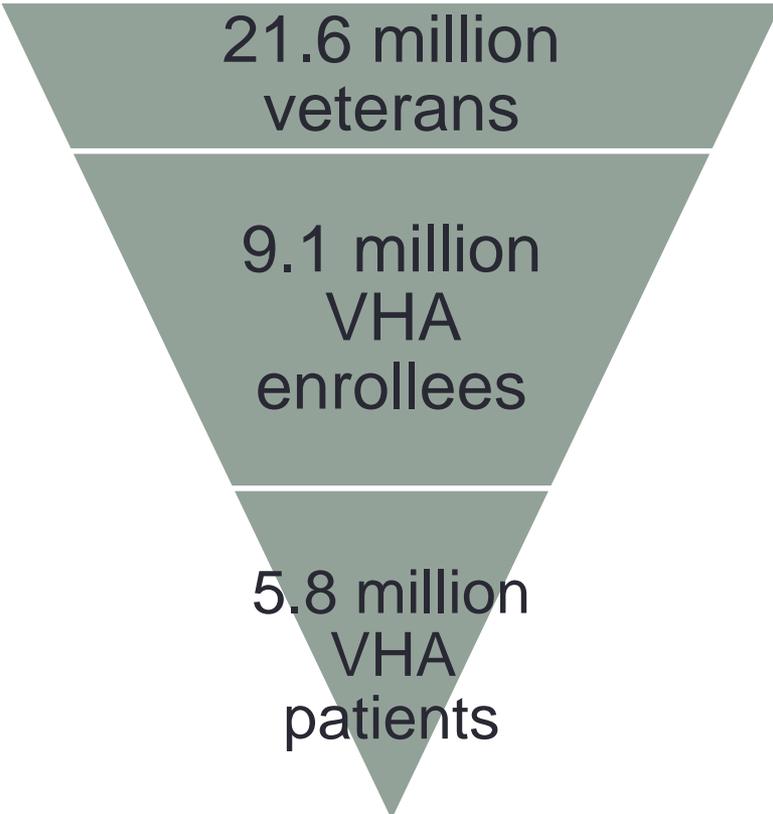
Poll Question

- What is your primary role at VA? Pick the best possible answer.
 - Research
 - Operations
 - Healthcare provider
 - Other

Outline of the Talk

- Background
- Methods
- Results
- Implications
- Q&A

VHA Overview



21.6 million
veterans

9.1 million
VHA
enrollees

5.8 million
VHA
patients

- Largest **integrated** healthcare system in U.S.
- 150 medical centers
- Over 1,400 other facilities
- Global budget of \$59 billion
- On average, patients relied on VHA for **50% of care**

Needs of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans

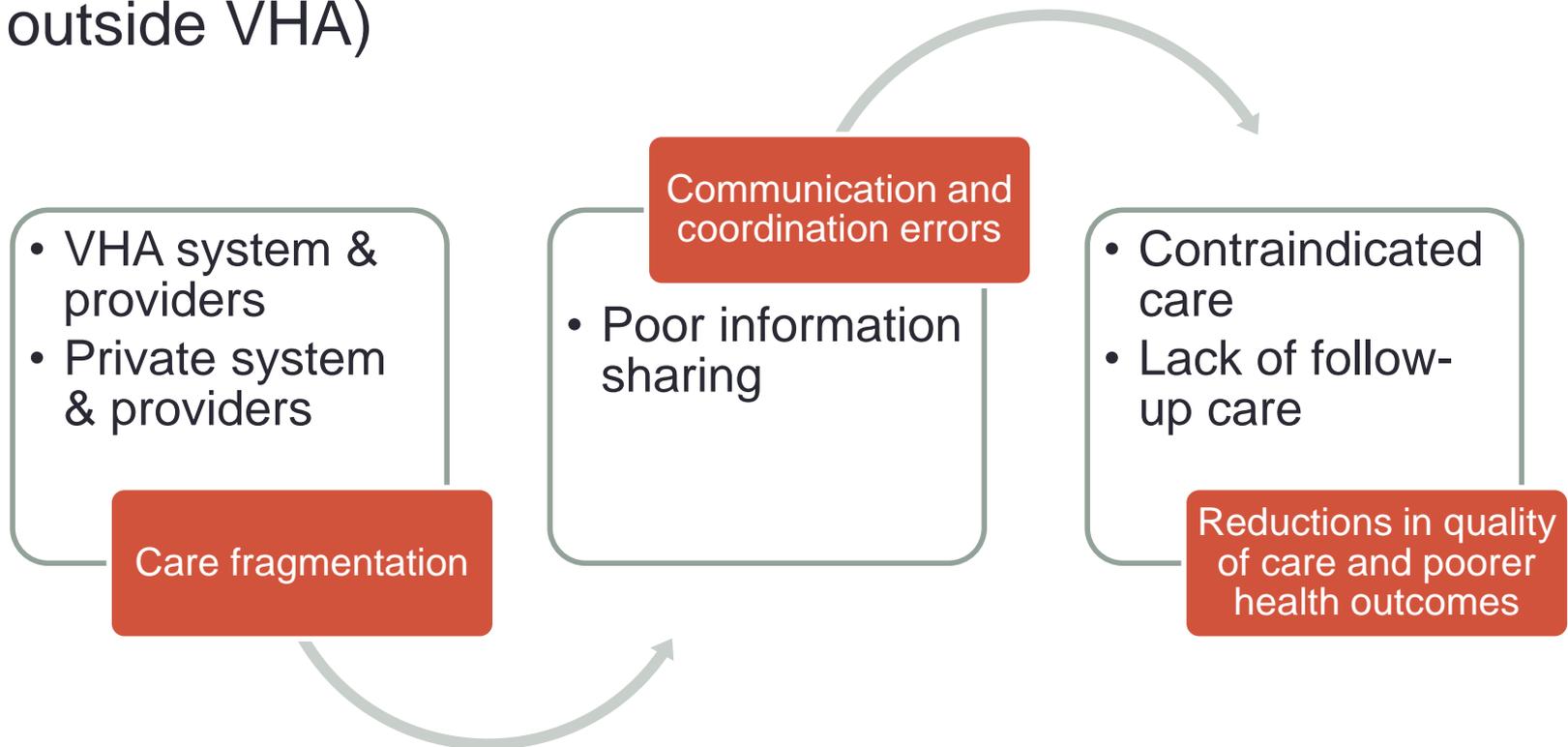
- Over 2 million service members
- Long deployments, frequently redeployed
- Combat survival 97%
- High levels of physical and mental health problems, particularly:
 - Traumatic brain injury (TBI)
 - Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
 - Substance use disorders (SUD)
 - Depression
- VHA low-cost option
- 61% enrolled in and utilized VHA

VCP to Address Access Issues

- Part of Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act (VACAA) of 2014
- Congress allocated **\$10 billion** for VCP for FY2015-17
- Pays for veterans to receive care **outside VHA**
- Eligible if long wait times, large driving distances, and/or particular hardships
 - **Wait-time** qualify for specific services outside VHA
 - **Mileage/hardship** qualify for any services outside VHA
- Small purchased care program (“**traditional Fee**”) existed before

Pros and Cons of VCP

- Broader **access** and **coverage**
- **Care fragmentation** (having providers both inside and outside VHA)



Hypotheses

- **More VCP use by mileage/hardship group** than wait-time group, due to VCP access differences
- **Substitution** of outpatient care – reduction in VHA care after VCP implementation

Sample

2 million Iraq and Afghanistan veterans

OEF/OIF/OND Roster

**1.5 million VHA enrollees
between FY2012-2015**

*Spatient, Corporate Data
Warehouse (CDW)*

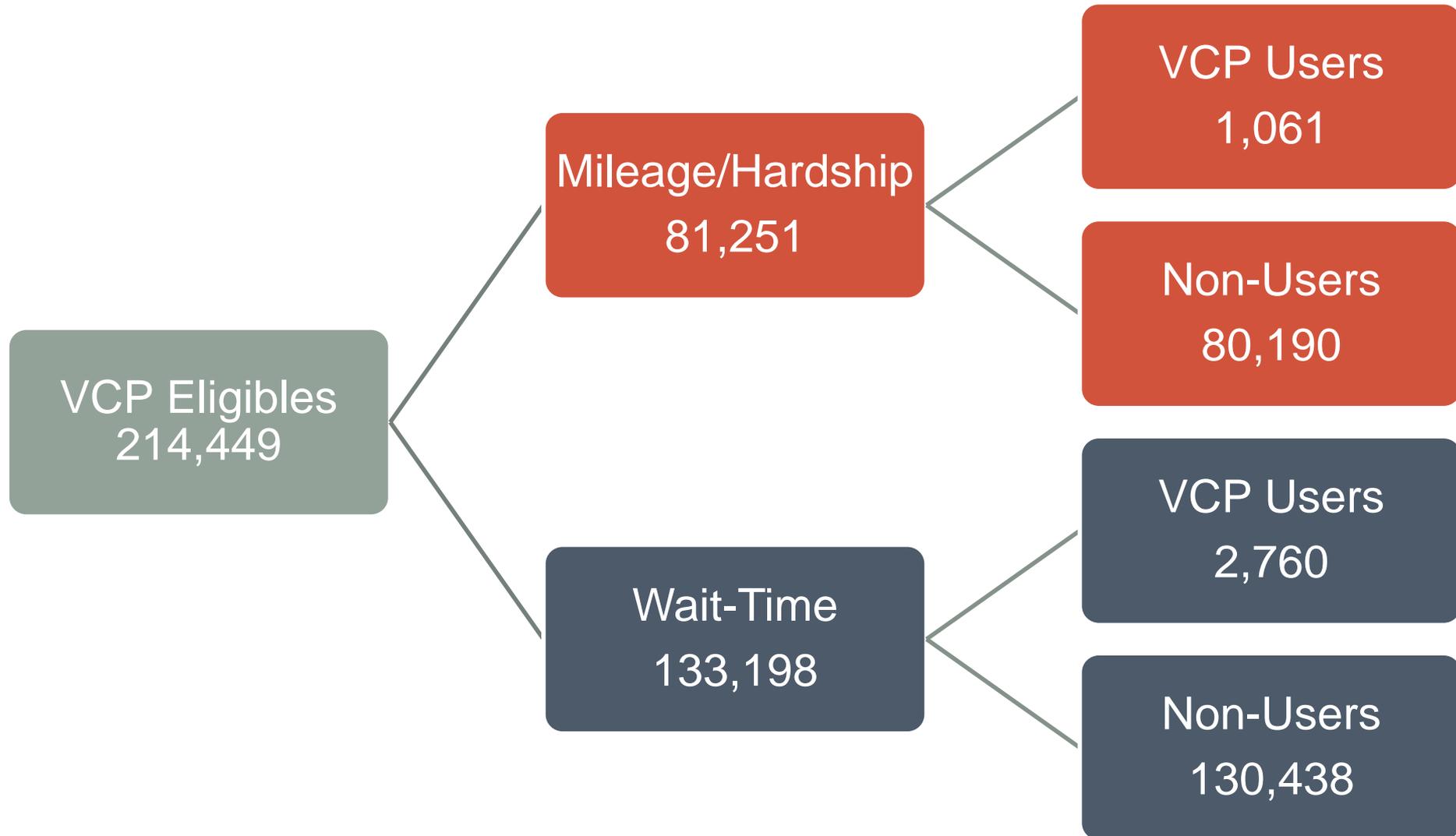
**214,449 VCP
eligible**

*VACAA,
CDW*

Key Variables for Descriptive Analyses

Variable(s)	Location in Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW)	Significance
vc_eligibilitycodeid	VACAA.Patients	VCP eligibility groups: wait-time or mileage/hardship
category_of_care	FBCS.outpatientauthorization	Care groups for purchased care
stop & credit	DSS.Out & DSS.Out2	Care groups for VHA care

VCP Users vs. Non-Users, FY2015



Characteristics of VCP Eligibles



Demographic

- Late thirties
- Male
- High school diploma
- White
- Half married



Military

- Army
- Active Duty
- Enlisted
- Half deployed multiple times



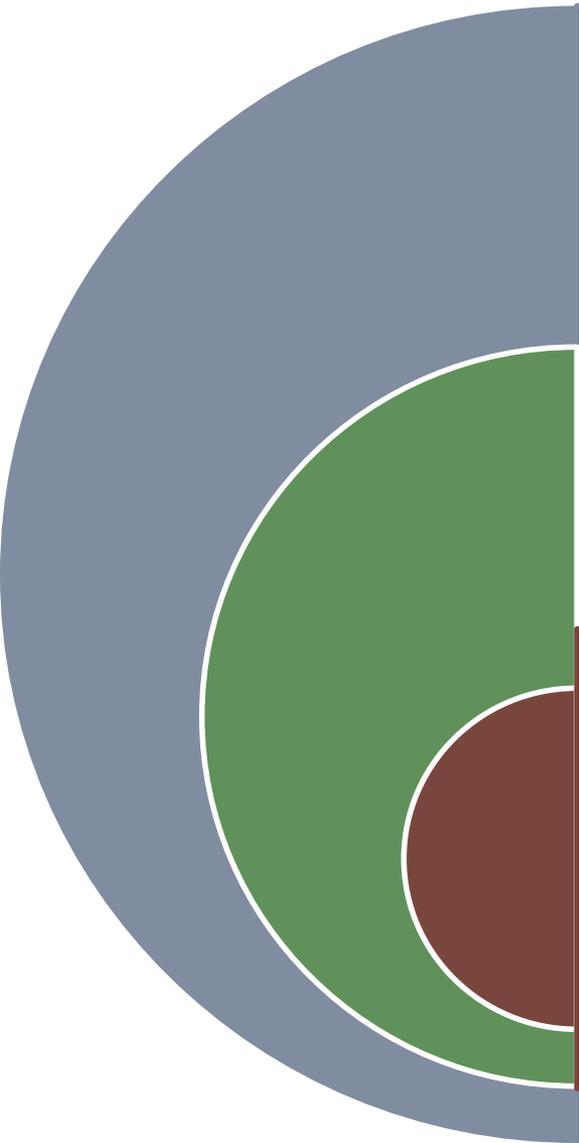
Healthcare Access

- VA priority level 1
- No health insurance
- More rural for mileage/hardship
- > Mean driving distance for mileage/hardship

VCP Eligibles, Users, and Visits, FY2015

- 214,449 VCP eligibles
- 3,821 unique VCP users (2% of eligibles)
- Peak of VCP users (1,078) and visits (2,332) in July

VCP Users by Care Type



Top 6

- Medical specialty care (n=1,848)
- Rehabilitation (n=758)
- Primary care (n=555)
- Alternative medicine (n=478)
- Mental health (n=217)
- Radiology (n=123)

Limited

- Compensation & pension (n=54)
- Unknown (n=8)
- Emergency (n=3)
- Other (n=1)

None

- Dental
- Dialysis
- End of Life
- Fee ID card
- Home health
- Lab
- Pharmacy
- Respite
- Skilled nursing facility
- Telephone and telehealth care

Medical Specialty Care

(visits per capita)

VCP Eligible	Pre VCP				Post VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait time (mean)	4.1	5.0	3.5	4.9	3.4	5.0	1.5	3.4	4.7
n	5,169	50,619	7,539	61,588	11,800	74,786	1,410	14,213	96,489
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	3.3	3.9	3.0	3.7	3.2	3.7	1.5	3.2	3.3
n	2,372	17,273	3,351	19,597	5,020	21,649	438	5,351	22,679

VCP User	Pre VCP				Post VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait time (mean)	2.9	5.4	2.8	6.7	3.5	5.8	1.5	4.5	5.5
n	80	669	114	776	168	935	1,410	209	1152
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	4.1	5.1	3.2	4.9	3.9	5.0	1.5	4.2	3.9
n	32	180	60	222	106	225	438	132	240

Rehabilitation

(visits per capita)

VCP Eligible	Pre VCP				Post VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait time (mean)	8.8	4.6	9.2	4.6	8.7	4.4	5.8	8.8	4.2
n	1,637	17,910	2,116	21,909	3,811	28,348	676	4,993	37,920
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	8.5	4.0	7.7	3.7	8.1	3.5	6.0	8.0	3.3
n	933	4,509	1,030	4,912	1,605	5,420	82	1,803	5,528

VCP User	Pre VCP				Post VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait time (mean)	9.3	4.0	10.4	5.2	9.4	4.5	5.8	8.4	3.6
n	10	107	19	122	51	184	676	81	259
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	9.9	1.9	9.6	2.8	9.3	3.5	6.0	15.3	2.4
n	7	8	7	11	11	21	82	20	20

Primary Care

(visits per capita)

VCP Eligible	Pre VCP				Post VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait time (mean)	3.5	2.9	3.0	2.8	2.1	2.8	1.3	4.1	2.6
n	21	61,056	2	74,040	5	90,885	199	37	115,067
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	1.9	2.3	14.0	2.3	1.3	2.3	1.4	3.9	2.1
n	29	23,184	1	26,433	3	29,961	356	59	31,626

VCP User	Pre VCP				Post VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait time (mean)	-	2.9	-	3.0	-	2.8	1.3	-	2.2
n	-	101	-	109	-	131	199	-	148
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	-	2.6	-	2.7	-	2.4	1.4	-	2.0
n	-	162	-	203	-	219	356	-	195

Alternative Medicine

(visits per capita)

VCP Eligible	Pre VCP				Post VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait time (mean)	9.3	4.7	9.0	4.5	8.8	11.0	6.1	8.7	-
n	672	235	901	344	1,705	1	326	2,592	-
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	7.2	5.3	7.9	4.0	7.5	-	5.0	7.8	-
n	332	40	592	50	887	-	152	1,072	-

VCP User	Pre VCP				Post VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait time (mean)	7.0	8.0	8.6	4.7	8.9	-	6.1	7.5	-
n	7	2	10	7	28	-	326	41	-
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	9.1	-	13.6	-	11.9	-	5.0	12.9	-
n	16	-	20	-	40	-	152	65	-

Mental Health

(visits per capita)

VCP Eligible	Pre VCP				Post VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait time (mean)	13.5	8.7	15.2	8.9	12.4	9.0	3.6	10.6	8.3
n	434	40,268	476	49,794	810	60,941	118	1,427	75,657
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	10.1	7.0	11.6	7.0	12.9	7.1	4.5	10.8	6.4
n	207	13,440	195	15,347	274	17,361	99	499	18,405

VCP User	Pre VCP				Post VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait time (mean)	13.0	10.1	17.0	9.3	10.0	10.2	3.6	15.3	5.8
n	1	34	1	55	3	73	118	19	99
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	6.0	7.3	2.8	9.3	10.9	8.7	4.5	8.5	6.0
n	2	39	4	48	7	53	99	9	58

Radiology

(visits per capita)

VCP Eligible	Pre VCP				Post VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait time (mean)	1.3	2.4	1.3	2.3	1.4	2.4	1.1	1.3	2.2
n	2,635	38,859	3,314	47,197	4,774	58,655	85	5,289	75,424
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	1.5	2.2	1.4	2.0	1.4	2.1	1.1	1.3	1.8
n	1,077	12,241	1,523	13,771	1,954	14,985	38	1,723	14,818

VCP User	Pre VCP				Post VCP				
	FY2012		FY2013		FY2014		FY2015		
Choice Eligibility Type	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	Trad. Fee	VHA	VCP	Trad. Fee	VHA
Wait time (mean)	1.0	2.7	1.7	2.3	1.5	2.1	1.1	1.3	2.4
n	2	23	5	27	5	53	85	10	64
Mileage and/or Hardship (mean)	1.0	2.2	1.5	2.2	1.3	1.6	1.1	1.3	1.8
n	2	12	4	16	5	13	38	7	17

Results Summary

- Per capita **VCP utilization was often higher for mileage/hardship** versus wait-time group
 - Higher for mental health (4.5 vs. 3.6), rehabilitation (6.0 vs. 5.8), and primary care (1.4 vs. 1.3)
 - Equivalent for medical specialty care (1.5) and radiology (1.1)
 - Lower for alternative medicine (5.0 vs. 6.1)
- Per capita **VHA utilization generally lowest after VCP** implementation (FY2015) compared to before VCP implementation (FY2012-2014)
 - In all 6 care groups and eligibility types for VCP eligibles
 - In most cases for VCP users – except in radiology, wait-time medical specialty care, and mileage/hardship rehabilitation

Limitations

- First year of program
- VCP data in CDW are new and need further evaluation
- No historical VCP eligibility information in CDW
 - No start and end dates for VCP eligibility
 - No information on transitions between eligibility type
- Future work needed to examine validity of category-of-care variable

Implications

- Low VCP utilization
 - VHA access relatively adequate prior to VCP?
 - Veterans prefer care in VHA?
 - Easier to use another source of payment for care outside VHA?
 - Veterans still learning about program?
- VCP implementation might have had an impact on VHA utilization amongst OEF/OIF/OND veterans

VHA's Changing Role

- **Growing role as payer**
 - Consolidation of traditional Fee and VCP planned (Public Law 114-41)
 - Pressure from Congress
 - E.g., Senator McCain's "Care Veterans Deserve" plan – provide VCP cards to all veterans
- **External environment**
 - Opposite force – to decrease care fragmentation
 - Improve quality and outcomes, decrease costs
 - Mixed evidence on achievability in ACO literature

Questions?

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Unique VCP Eligibles by Fiscal Year

Choice Group	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015
Wait-time	90,196	104,834	119,522	133,198
Mileage and/or Hardship	58,909	67,368	74,619	81,251
Total	149,105	172,202	194,171	214,449