

What are your goals for partnered research?

Does your partner know about your goals?  
Does your partner share them?

# Operations-researcher integration: lessons learned from a fruitful partnership

Christine W. Hartmann, Ph.D.

Lisa Minor, RN, MSSL

A. Lynn Snow, Ph.D.

VA Central Office's Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care  
CLCs' Ongoing National Center for Enhancing Resources and Training  
(CONCERT) team

How we went from



pen pals to...



FB friends to...



lunch buddies to...

ICE\* contacts.



\* In Case of Emergency

# POLL QUESTION #1

- #1: On what do you spend the majority of your work time? [pick one]
  - Clinical care
  - Research/quality improvement
  - Education
  - Administration/management (local, regional, or national level)
  - Other

# How 2 researchers met...



# How we met our operations partners...



# POLL QUESTION #2

- #2: What interactions have you had with VA operations? [pick all that apply]
  - Email
  - Phone call
  - Face-to-face meeting(s)
  - Partnering on research grant(s)/operations project(s)
  - Running operations-funded study/project/center/etc.



# History of Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care

Operations  
**2008**



***Policy***

**2011 –  
2017**



**Now**

Operations



Policy

# Current Organization Snapshot

- **Acting Executive Director:** Scottie Hartronft, MD
  - **Director, Community Living Centers (CLCs):** Lisa Minor, RN, MSSL
    - **Program Manager, CLC and Survey Program:** Sheryl Terkildsen, RN, MSN
    - **Program Analyst:** Janet Barber, MPRTM, MDiv
    - **CLCs' Ongoing Center for Enhancing Resources and Training (CONCERT):** Hartmann & Snow

# POLL QUESTION #3

- #3: What do you perceive as the largest **hurdle** for working well together with operational partners on your mutual interests? [pick one]
  - Not knowing how to make contact
  - Lack of time (your side and/or theirs)
  - Differing speeds of research studies and operations needs
  - Shifting priorities (research and/or operations)
  - Other

How we went from



pen pals to...



FB friends to...



lunch buddies to...

ICE contacts.



# Pen Pals



(2008-2011)

- Shared goals
  - Investigate experiences of Green House/small house CLCs
  - Develop new measure for person-centered care
  - Help CLCs implement person-centered care

# Pen Pals



- Interactions
  - Email/phone
  - Visits to DC
  - Meeting at conferences
  - Participation in/leadership of GEC workgroups
- Products
  - Pilot grant (PPO 09-266) funding (w/GEC)
  - Research instrument\* (w/GEC)
  - Piloting of survey instrument at national conference (w/GEC)
  - Papers/presentations
  - IIR application (w/GEC)

\* Snow AL, Dodson, MLJ, Palmer JA, Parmelee PA, Allen RS, Wewiorski NJ, Hilgeman M, Vinson, LD, Berlowitz D, Halli AD, **Hartmann CW**. Development of a New Systematic Observation Tool of Nursing Home Resident and Staff Engagement and Relationship. *The Gerontologist*. 2018;58(2): e15-e24.



# Pen Pals



- Hurdles
  - New relationships
  - Unclear future for the research agenda(s)
- Facilitators
  - Trust
  - Enthusiasm
  - Face-to-face encounters

# Pen Pals



- Impact
  - Research perspective
    - Grew our research agenda
    - Completed pilot study
  - Operations perspective
    - Developed draft tool to measure person-centered care

# Facebook Friends



(2012-2015)

- Shared goals
  - Refine tool to measure person-centered care, for eventual use in CLCs
  - Continue to investigate other aspects of person-centered care
  - Support CLCs implementing person-centered care

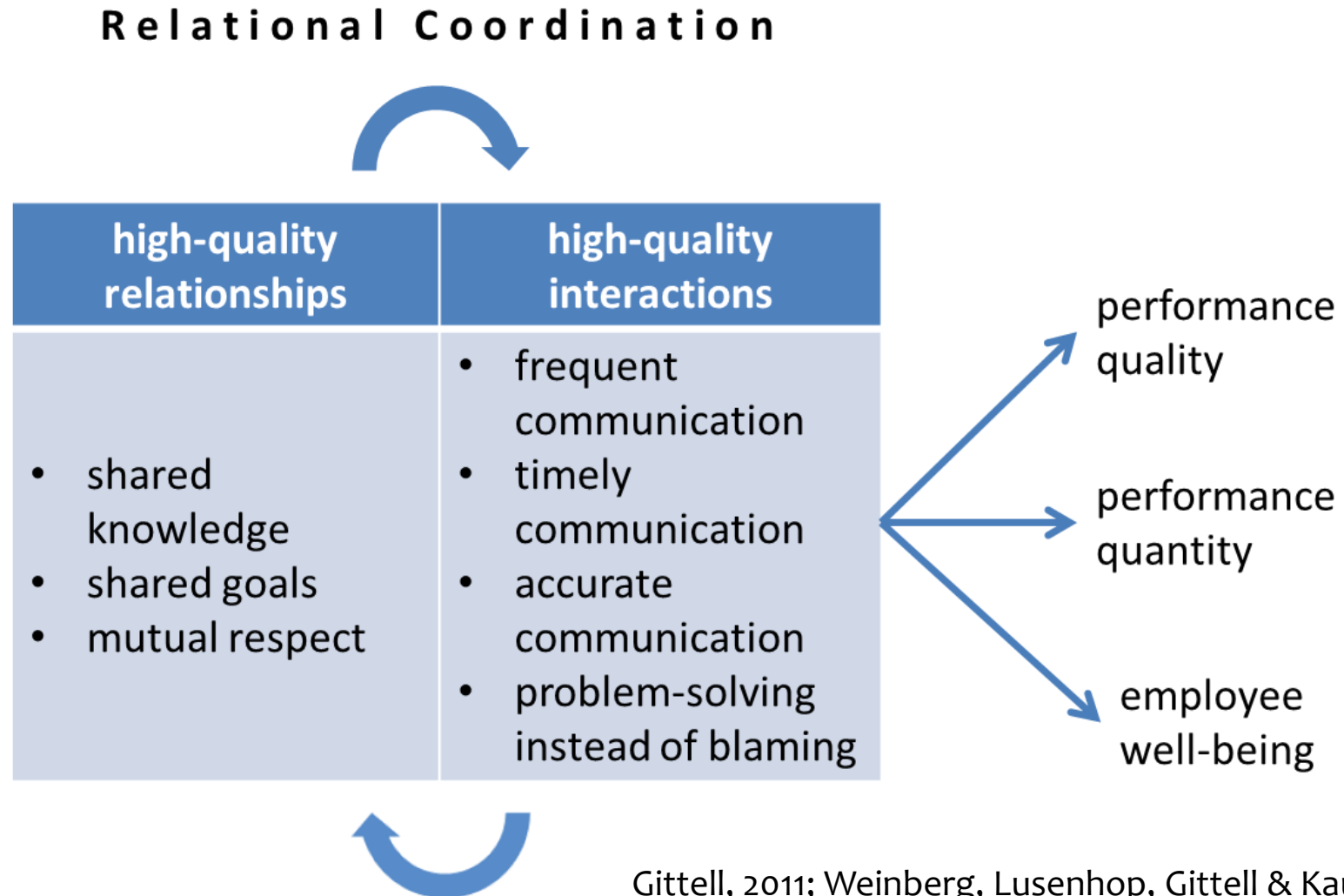
# DIRECT (2013; HSR&D IIR)

(Developing and Implementing Resident-centered Efforts in Cultural Transformation)

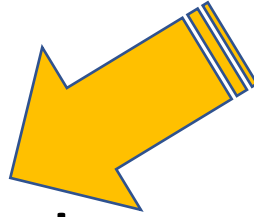
- Adapted person-centered care tool for use by CLC staff
- Piloted tool in 6 CLCs



# Relational Coordination



# LOCK in Success!



Learn from Bright Spots

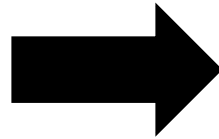
Observations by Everyone

Collaborate in Huddles

Keep it Bite-Size!



October 28, 2015



# Facebook Friends



- Interactions
  - Email/phone
  - Visits to DC/interactions at conferences
  - Participation in/leadership of GEC workgroups
  - **Briefing to all of GEC in DC**
- Products
  - IIRs (w/ GEC)
  - Papers/presentations
  - **National rollout preparation (w/ GEC), including face-to-face meeting of entire GEC & Bright Spots Program teams**
  - **CLCs' Ongoing National Center for Enhancing Resources and Training (CONCERT) as umbrella organization**



# Facebook Friends



- Hurdles
  - GEC operations-policy split
  - Retirement of policy arm's CLC Director
- Facilitators
  - Involving CLC staff in research
  - Increasing researcher familiarity with frontline CLC care
  - Collaborating across GEC's operations and policy arms
  - Increasing trust and understanding in the relationships

# Facebook Friends



- Impact
  - Research perspective
    - 3 IIRs on the topic of person-centered care in CLCs
  - Operations perspective
    - Research agenda aligned with longer-term goals of GEC
    - Partnership leading to potentially meaningful changes in CLCs

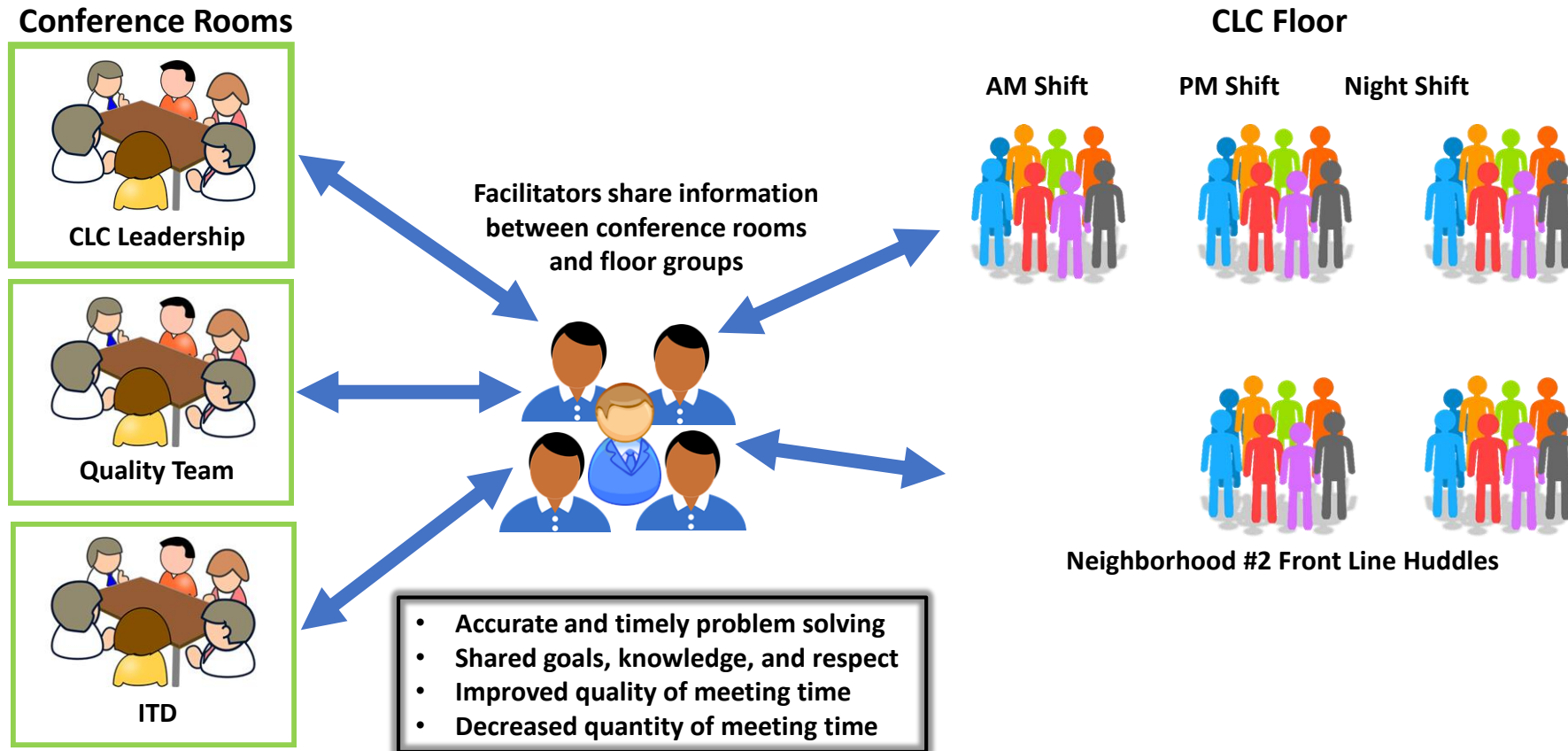
# Lunch Buddies



(2015-2018)

- Shared goals
  - Help CLCs improve resident engagement and resident-staff interactions
  - Help support CLCs' quality improvement infrastructures
  - Leverage best resources available
  - Partner and integrate with other VA offices to support CLCs

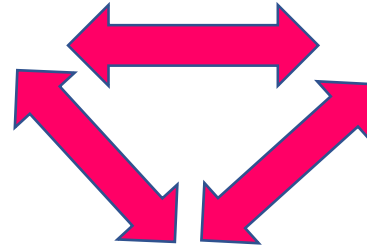
# Frontline Huddling using Bright Spots Approach



# LOCK bundle practices

Continuous, bi-directional communication  
Quality improvement mindset

**Inter-disciplinary & Quality Teams**



**Frontline Staff Huddles**



**CLC Leadership Team**



# Lunch Buddies



(2015-2018)

- Interactions
  - Email/phone/visits to DC/interactions at conferences
  - Participation in/leadership of GEC workgroups
  - **GEC & program teams joint conference calls**
  - **GEC & program team joint in-person meetings**
- Products
  - Papers
  - **Joint conference presentations with GEC**
  - **Prep for national roll out (FY16)**
  - **Bright Spots Program national rollout (FY17)**
  - **CONCERT expansion (FY18)**

# Lunch Buddies



- Joint hurdles
  - GEC operations-policy merger
  - Rapid timeline for national rollout launch & CONCERT programs
- Joint facilitators
  - Trust
  - Joint-efforts regarding mutually established goals
  - Using relational coordination as guiding principle for entire team

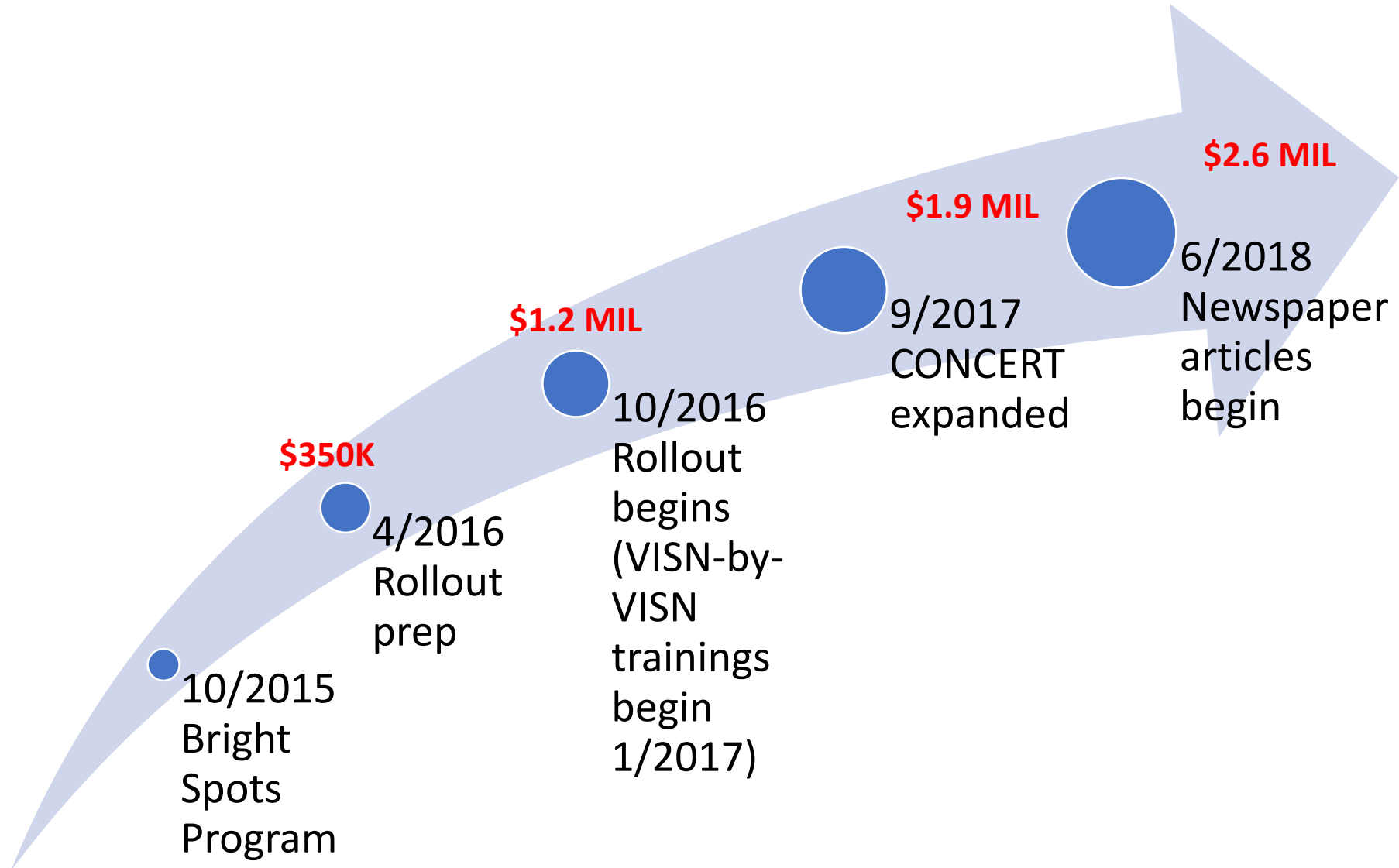
# Lunch Buddies



- Joint impact
  - National program (CONCERT) jointly administered by operations and research
  - National team based in Bedford, DC, and Tuscaloosa



# Timeline



**Late in week of  
June 4, 2018**

USA Today begins contact with  
Central Office over VA's "secret"  
CLC quality ratings

**VA**



**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs**

# **News Release**

Office of Public Affairs  
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20460  
(202) 461-7600  
www.va.gov

**June 12**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 12, 2018

## **VA Extends Record of Transparency with First-Ever Posting of Annual Nursing Home Ratings**

*Data Show VA Facilities Compare Closely With Private Sector Nursing Homes Overall*

Today the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) extended its unprecedented 18-month record of transparency disclosures by making public for the first time its annual nursing home ratings. View the ratings [here](#).

The data show that, overall, VA's nursing home system – composed of more than 130 community living centers – compares closely with private sector nursing homes, even though the department on average cares for sicker patients in its nursing homes than do private facilities.

In fact, the overall star rating for VA's nursing homes compared to the 15,487 private sector nursing homes rated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) shows that VA has a significantly lower percentage (34.1 percent lower) of one-star, or lowest rated, facilities than the rest of the nation.

Of note, 60 of VA's nursing homes improved their quality score from last year to this year (2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter FY17 to 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter FY18). Only one facility had a meaningful decline in that metric, and that facility was already rated with four stars.

### **Extending President Trump's Commitment to VA Transparency, Quality Improvement**

For years, the Obama administration [had resisted](#) making certain VA quality data public. But under President Trump's leadership, transparency and accountability have become hallmarks of VA.

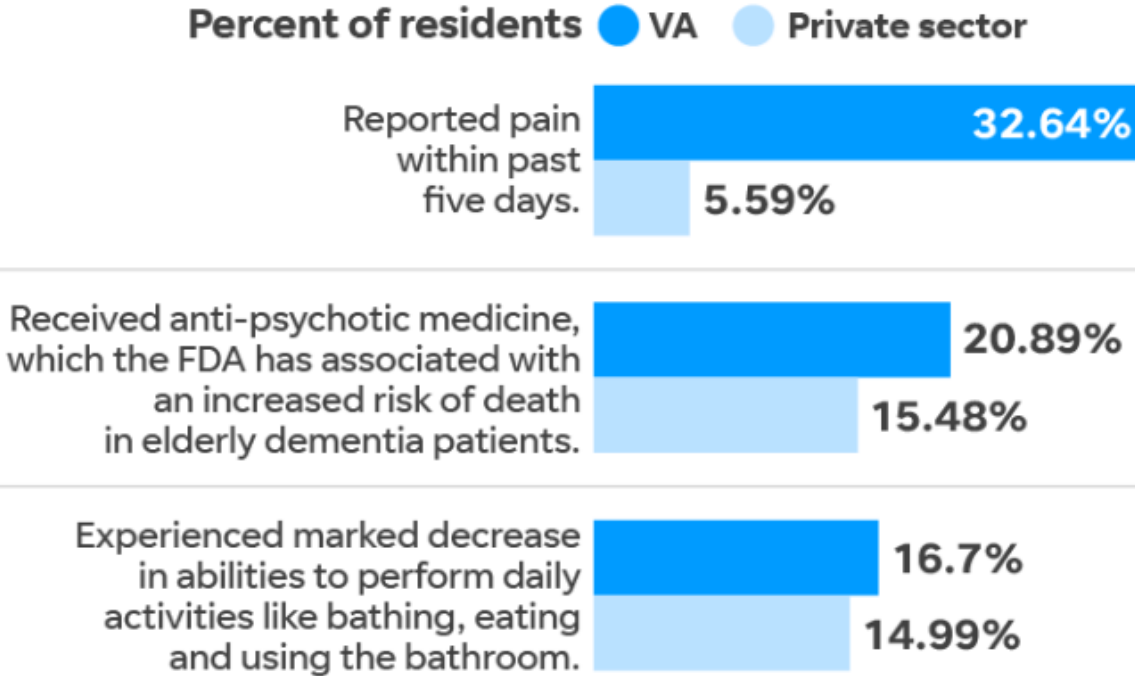


42

were the only one-star nursing homes in New England.

## Secret data show VA nursing homes worse than private sector

Internal documents obtained in a USA TODAY/Boston Globe investigation reveal for the first time that the VA nursing homes performed worse on average than private nursing homes on a majority of key measures. How they stacked up in 2017 on five of those measures:



June 18



**Secret VA nursing home ratings hide poor care**

Almost half of facilities in USA get lowest marks

By Robert Clark and Andrew Burt

For years, the VA has been accused of hiding poor care from public view, despite warnings of potentially deadly health care problems. Now, nearly half of its nursing homes nationwide — considered the agency's lowest ranking of one star or less — are getting the lowest possible rating, according to documents obtained by USA TODAY and The Boston Globe.

The VA's internal quality data shows that in 2017, 46% of its nursing homes received the lowest possible rating, a one-star rating. The VA's internal quality data shows that in 2017, 46% of its nursing homes received the lowest possible rating, a one-star rating.

**More Dems reject cash from special interests**

Candidates see an advantage with voters

WASHINGTON — Rep. Ben Ray Lujan said his Republican wife, Elizabeth, had turned down a \$100,000 cash offer from a special interest group that would be disappointed by his loss.

"My explanation was only to be my responsibility," said Lujan, who represents N.M. 1. "I don't want to be a part of this anymore."

Lujan's wife is now serving as the U.S. House's first female speaker, and she is also a member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

# What are we doing about it?

June 20

- Extensive national training (webinars and face-to-face) on RAC and MDS Data Accuracy and Inspection Survey requirements
- National launch of “Bright Spots”, a front-line quality improvement program based on a successful CMS model used to improve under-performing nursing homes
- On-site visits for training and hands-on performance improvement work
  - Of 17 1-star sites at start of year, 11 intensive on-site reviews completed, 4 scheduled, the remaining 2 being contacted
  - One of these sites has already moved to 4 Star
- Resident Assessment Coordinator (RAC) mentoring program
- Enlisting and training additional subject matter experts from high performing sites to assist others



Choose **VA**

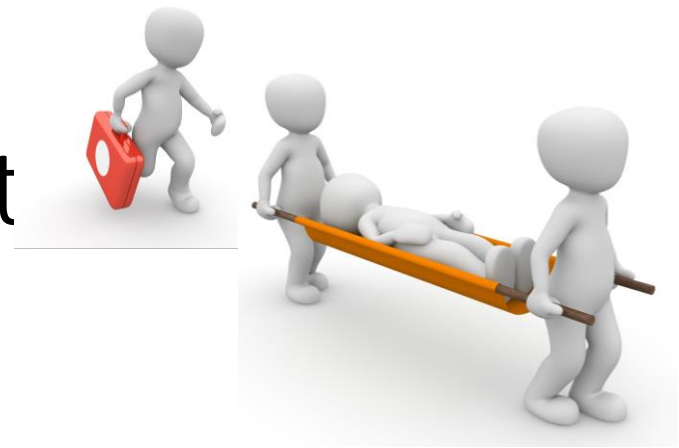
VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

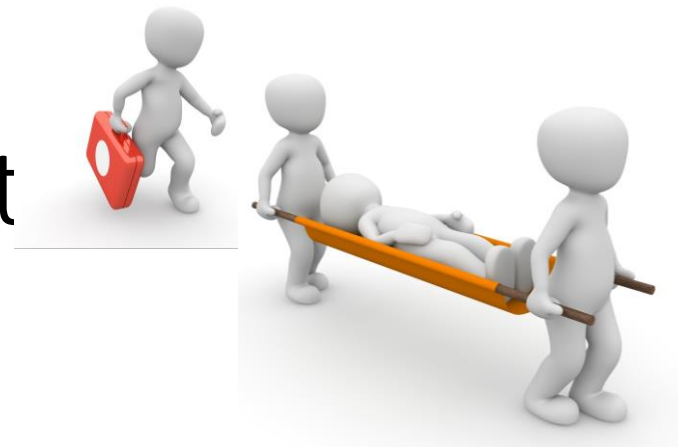
10

# In-Case-of-Emergency (ICE) Contact



- Shared goals
  - Help CLCs improve resident engagement and resident-staff interactions
  - Expand CONCERT focus to support CLCs in multiple areas
  - Help support CLCs' quality improvement infrastructures
  - Leverage best resources available
  - **Respond nimbly to pressing CLC needs**
  - **Continue to expand partnerships with other VA offices**
  - **Support Central Office in achieving its goals**

# In-Case-of-Emergency (ICE) Contact



- Interactions
  - Email/phone
  - Visits to DC/interactions at conferences
  - Team conference calls
  - Team in-person meetings
  - **Texting**
  - **Separate leadership team meetings (in-person and phone)**
- Products
  - Papers
  - Joint conference presentations with GEC
  - **Joint grant applications (including QUERI Hub)**
  - **Expansion of CONCERT activities**
  - **GEC org chart membership**

# Current Activities

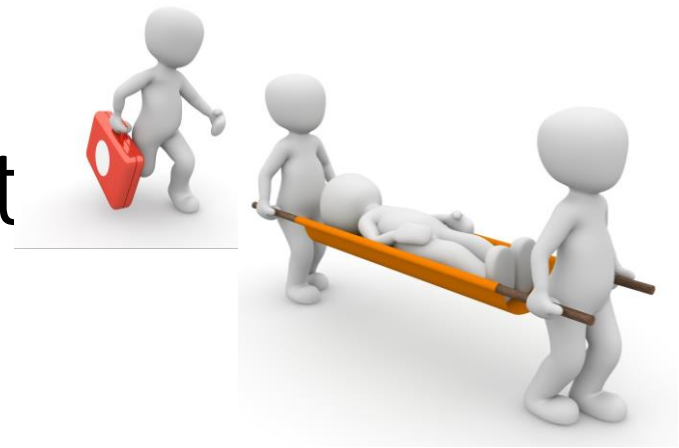
- CONCERT is part of GEC functional org chart
- Conducting top performer site visits
- Conducting learning intensives for lower-performing CLCs
- Conducting VISN-level site support
- Undertaking outcome assessments
- Partnering with other VA offices



# POLL QUESTION #4

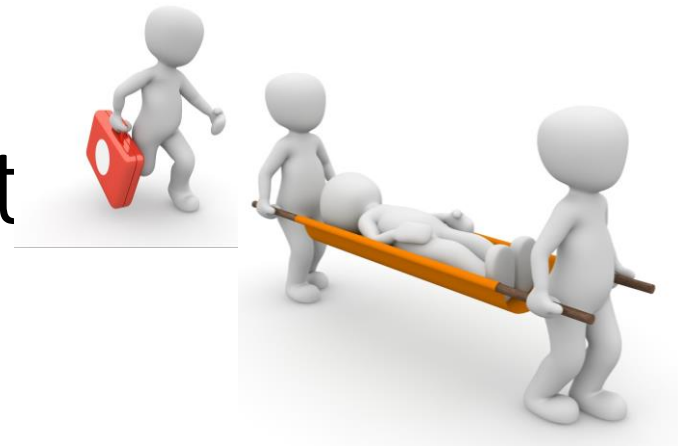
- #4: What is your most pressing question **for our GEC partners**? [pick one]
  - Why roll out the Bright Spots Program? What appealed to you?
  - What are the key elements that make your partnership work?
  - What advice to you have for other researchers?
  - What differentiates operations & research worlds the most?
  - What are your go-to sources for learning about research?

# In-Case-of-Emergency (ICE) Contact



- Joint hurdles
  - Rapid changes in national priorities
  - Changes within GEC
- Joint facilitators
  - Established, cohesive team
  - Multiple face-to-face opportunities
  - Mutual sense of mission, respect, and trust within team
  - Entirely co-established agendas

# In-Case-of-Emergency (ICE) Contact



- Joint impact
  - Nimble response to crises
  - Recognition by top levels of VHA
  - Increasing partnership through GEC with other operations offices
  - Potential expansion to non-VA nursing homes

# Final Thoughts

- Relationships change over time
- Invest for the long term
- Seize opportunities
- Respect differing priorities
- Continually reevaluate common agendas
- Communicate



# Questions?

christine.hartmann@va.gov  
lynn.snow@va.gov

## Resources

<https://vaww.infoshare.va.gov/sites/hsrd/QUERIResources/Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx> (click on VA Priority Resources)

<https://www.vapulse.net/groups/bright-spots-program-in-clcs>