



The Virtues of Vascular Surgery in the VA

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By Ryan McEnaney, MD & Kathleen Raman, MD
Members of the SVS VA Vascular Surgeons Committee

Fortune smiles upon the vascular surgeon, as opportunities are plentiful and demand continues to increase. While there are many possibilities, one that any finishing vascular fellow would be remiss to discount is that of building a career within the VA healthcare system. There are many reasons to consider the VA: for starters, the versatility of a VA career is unmatched. The VA comprises the largest healthcare system in the country, accounting for 1,200 hospitals and facilities in total serving 9 million enrolled Veterans. There is no need to build a patient base! Malpractice insurance is covered and salary is guaranteed, which keeps focus on patient care rather than productivity measures. There are administrative leadership opportunities early on and, as a VA vascular surgeon, your medical license is valid in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

Second, the VA provides ample opportunity for teaching students and training future vascular surgeons as it is affiliated with over 1,800 unique educational institutions nationwide, including most allopathic and osteopathic medical schools. VA surgeons play a major role in graduate medical education - over 70% of VA physicians have faculty appointments and participate in teaching activities both in and out of the operating room.

Interested in building a research career? There are many resources provided by the VA to do so. Careers in basic and clinical research are fostered through funding mechanisms such as the Career Development and the Merit Review Awards. These federally sponsored grants provide substantial salary support (ensuring protected time for research) and are awarded exclusively to investigators with VA appointments. Most VA researchers are also clinicians providing patient care, demonstrating the VA commitment to translational research and retention of its talented professionals.

The VA is an important source of high-quality clinical research. VA investigators and the VA Cooperative Studies Program have contributed to clinical trials that have influenced the management of carotid disease, aortic aneurysms, lower limb arterial occlusive disease and hemodialysis access. There are ample opportunities to participate in multicenter trials, such as the ongoing CREST-2. Health services research at the VA is robust as well. Supported by the Corporate Data Warehouse, the vast longitudinal clinical data represent a tremendous opportunity for advancing management of vascular disease. The Million Veteran Program (MVP) is building one of the largest repositories of genetic and health information worldwide, providing unique and exciting opportunities to study genetic influence on health and disease.

Of course, central to the practice of vascular surgery at the VA is the privilege of caring for our nation's veterans. It is an honor to work with these incredible men and women, to hear their stories and help to improve their lives. Our Veterans trust and choose the VA Healthcare System, a system that continues to provide high quality and

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comprehensive healthcare. Those who have served our country and “borne the battle” comprise a population that is heavily afflicted with arterial and venous disease. It is no exaggeration to say the VA vascular clinician’s skills will be challenged from the very outset. Complex open, endovascular and hybrid procedures are commonly indicated, and the VA needs well-trained vascular surgeons who can perform them.

So, what are you waiting for?

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