

VA Mobile Discussion Series

November 2019 Webinar:

VA's Mobile Discussion Series is a monthly webinar featuring a variety of topics focused around app development and mobile health at VA.

Micah Azzano: Hello everyone. Welcome and thank you for attending our Connected Care Discussion Series webinar. This month's discussion is Annie for Weight Management. My name is Micah Azzano, and I'm going to run through a few brief technical reminders before we begin. Your phone lines are muted so we'll be taking questions through the chat feature. The chat function is available to you at the right of your screen, and if you're experiencing technical difficulties, please use the chat and someone will be with you to assist.

If you would like to download this presentation, please click on the file name below the chat screen. The full presentation will also be available at a later date on the Connected Care Discussion Series webpage. Today, we welcome our presenter, Melissa Treinen, a VA Telehealth Dietician. During the webinar today we will be discussing Annie weight management protocol, and again we are taking questions periodically through the webinar, so please type them into the chat feature at any time. And with that I will turn over to Melissa.

Melissa Treinen: Thank you, Micah, and thank you for that introduction. My name's Melissa Treinen, and I work at the VA Black Hills Healthcare System as the Telehealth Dietician. I have been using Annie since 2016 when it was introduced at our site during a pilot testing phase. Our geographical area is quite rural, and so using technology to connect with veterans is extremely helpful in providing access and care. The Office of Connected Care offers several tools that allow clinicians to communicate and provide care to veterans.

I use a variety of these tools regularly and today I'm going to discuss how the Annie program can serve as a component of a weight management intervention to support veterans. Let's start off by looking at the rates of obesity within the Veterans Health Administration. Obesity prevalence continues to increase in VHA. This chart shows the prevalence of overweight and obesity in veterans seen in VHA from 2000 to 2018. In fiscal year '18, 80% of veterans seen in VHA were overweight or obese, which means that's over 4.1 million veterans.

The red bar on the graph shows the prevalence of obesity, and the gray bar shows the prevalence of overweight. Starting at the bottom at FY2000, you'll see that the red bar, which is obesity, has steadily increased over time while the gray bar overweight and blue bar normal weight have decreased over time. Fortunately, VHA offers programs that assist in helping to reduce the rates of obesity, including the MOVE! Weight Management Program and tools to support interventions including the MOVE! Coach app and Annie program.

Now let's move on and talk about who and what Annie is. The Annie program is the VA's automated texting platform for veterans self-care. The program is named after Lieutenant Annie G. Fox. She was the chief nurse at Hickman Field during the attack on Pearl Harbor, and is



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Veterans Health Administration
Office of Connected Care

the first woman to receive a Purple Heart for combat. Annie was developed through an international collaboration with the British National Health Services, and is modeled after a similar text messaging program in the United Kingdom, which is named Flo, after the founder of modern nursing, Florence Nightingale.

Clinicians can assign automated protocols and tailor to each veteran. There are several features that allow a veteran to engage in self-care. Annie sends motivational and educational messages to veterans to encourage them to stay on track with their care plan and achieve their goals. Messages and patient's data are stored in the Annie system where clinicians can view the text message history and reading submitted and grasped for individual responses.

Clinicians can tailor the automated protocols to individual veterans and customize settings of the schedules, readings, alerts and messages. It is important to note that Annie messages are automated, and Annie is not direct messaging between veterans and clinicians. Annie has been released for the VA National Youth and training is in progress. You can visit the Annie SharePoint site to learn more about implementation at your site.

Next, we'll take a closer look at the Annie weight management protocol. The protocol was developed by the MOVE! Program Office and the Office of Connected Care. This 30 days nationally developed protocol can be assigned by Annie trained clinicians to help veterans working on weight management independently, for veterans participating in a MOVE! Program option such as MOVE! group or individual sessions, telephone lifestyle coaching, clinical video teleconferencing or for veterans who have graduated from MOVE! and are working on weight maintenance.

Micah Azzano: Thanks, Melissa. I just want to jump in here really quick with a question. How often do veterans need to participate in the protocol?

Melissa Treinen: As far as how often that's really dependent upon how much data that they want to send and how often they want to. They can participate daily, we'll get more in depth on the detail shortly, but it can be a daily text message, a simple text message that they would submit back to Annie. Or possibly weekly depending upon what messages they want.

Micah Azzano: Excellent. And you mentioned a couple of different things. But how can a veteran easily get access to Annie weight loss protocol?

Melissa Treinen: Yes, that is a great question. They can ask their healthcare team to sign up for Annie. Also, if they are already signed up for Annie, they can still subscribe the weight management protocol as well.

Micah Azzano: Fantastic. We are going to be taking questions continuously throughout the presentation so please enter them into the chat feature and we will get to them if not, during the presentation at the end. Thank you. Melissa, I'll turn it back over to you.



Melissa Treinen: Thank you. All right. The weight management protocol includes daily educational messages for weight management and provides healthy living reminders to exercise, count calories and measure weight. Any messages are designed to provide support and encouragement as veterans work through their weight management journey. They're encouraged to contact their VA Healthcare team or MOVE! team with any questions.

Veterans may choose to receive automated messages to track and submit their weight, physical activity, and calories consumed throughout the day. These messages are preset; however, they can be customized based on individual preference. The frequency or time of day they receive messages may be changed and reminder messages can also be enabled for their weight, physical activity and daily caloric intake.

Self-monitoring is a well-established component of weight management. And the first feature I want to share with you is the weight section. The protocol is set to send an automated message once a week to obtain a weight from the veteran. Veterans can customize the frequency as desired. Some prefer to weigh in once a week, whereas some may weigh themselves a few times a week or even daily. It's based on individual preference. The time of day they receive the preset message can be customized as well. You can see part of the settings page here where the clinician may tailor to individual preferences.

Physical activity is an important part of a weight management program and the protocol provides reminders to incorporate regularly. In addition, veterans can submit their total minutes of exercise each day. The automated messages that veterans receive requesting the minutes of exercise has been helpful with accountability and encouragement to keep active. Under the schedule settings displayed here, changes can be made to the time or day messages are received.

One of the most common and important types of self-monitoring strategies in weight management is tracking daily intake. The MOVE! Program has some great options for tracking including the MOVE! Coach app and move food and activity logs. Veterans can keep count of their total intake for the day and then submit to Annie at the end of the day. The slide here displays the settings page where the time the messages are sent, maybe tailored.

What I find helpful about this protocol are the engaging questions and helpful tips Annie offers. Motivational messages are included to support behavior change. Tips on being more active, making healthier food choices, managing stress, mindful eating, even handling weight plateaus are provided in the automated messages. Annie provides tips and ideas that veterans can implement. Here you can see some of the motivational messages Annie may send.

Education is provided on SMART Goals, and veterans are encouraged to set achievable goals. A weekly message is sent on goal setting asking if the veteran would like to set a goal. And if they choose to, they will receive a message to then rate their confidence level in meeting their goal for the week on a scale of zero to 10. After they enter their confidence rating, Annie will send an automated motivational message based on a scaled response.



In addition to the weekly goal setting questions, they will also receive a message in the protocol reading their importance of weight management as well as how prepared they are to manage their weight. At week four, they receive a message asking about their support system and who supports their efforts to make healthy changes. They are also offered additional support by contacting their healthcare team or MOVE! team for additional support. On the screen you can view the goal settings page and modify as needed on the actual protocol.

Micah Azzano: And Melissa, we have a couple of questions here, if I can jump in. Are all of these settings the veterans set for themselves, or does someone else do that?

Melissa Treinen: The study that is displayed here is on the clinician side where the clinician can go in and tailor for the veteran.

Micah Azzano: And in order for the veteran to use Annie, does their PACT or PCC has to participate? In other words, would MOVE! be able to move forward with this without their PACT using their fidelity?

Melissa Treinen: Annie trained clinicians can assign these protocols, and so you on the one slide had the Annie SharePoint site and you can actually go in and find the contact person at your site to be able to get trained for Annie and assign these protocols.

Micah Azzano: Excellent. We'll be taking more questions again later on the presentation. Melissa, I'll let you continue, thank you.

Melissa Treinen: All right. On the slide displayed here you can see the message history displayed on the screen. The clinician can view all of the messages sent by Annie and received from the veteran. Again, this is on the clinician side. I find this area helpful to review as you can see what messages a veteran is responding to. Also, the protocol can be paused if needed. If a veteran is going on vacation or will be unable to send any information for a brief period of time, they can text, pause, to Annie and it'll place the protocol on hold until the veteran is ready to resume participation in which they text Annie back, resume.

Now that we have discussed the details of the weight management protocol in the settings, I will share with you how the protocol can be implemented and some of the ways I find that useful. One of the most common scenarios in which I use this protocol is for veterans that graduate or in participation in MOVE!, the home Telehealth option for MOVE! It is a good transition for veterans who have met their goals from TeleMOVE! and want to continue to receive the support for weight management.

It is a nice option for veterans who do not want the daily participation with the TeleMOVE! Program, but they do want the accountability with their weight management journey. I have had veterans that complete the 90 day cycle of TeleMOVE! and then go on to participate in Annie. It's been a great way to keep the veterans engaged and motivated as they work towards their goals.



The most benefits I have noticed at our site with this protocol is when it is used in conjunction with MOVE! visits such as individual telephone or VA Video Connect appointments. Annie provides engagement and promotes self-care on a regular basis and in between appointments. As a clinician, it is helpful to have their weight vitals and or exercise, or calorie intake information available as I prepare for their follow-up visits.

I can see the information during our appointment to see how they are doing with their goals and progress in between appointments. This information helps looking at the collective clinical data and you can note any trends from the weight, physical activity or calorie information submitted. It provides an opportunity during the visit to discuss and explore some of those barriers they may come across.

There are several features that are beneficial to veterans. The first is that it's personalized. Veterans like that we can customize the features so that they receive the messages at days and times that work for them. The ability to change the settings on the protocol has been extremely beneficial, specifically the time and dates messages are received. I find that that veterans feel empowered by the opportunity to personalize the settings.

We can change the data perimeters or timing of the messages to accommodate their lifestyle. If they prefer a message at 7:00 in the morning rather than 9:00 AM, we can modify to have the messages sent to the veteran at the time that is most conducive for them. For example, I have modified the motivational messages to be received in the evenings by request to help prevent boredom snacking for one veteran. The result from having these messages sent during this timeframe kept the veteran more mindful of their intake in the evening.

Veterans find it easy to communicate with Annie as no smartphone is needed, so as long as they have texting capability, they can reply to the messages. Participation in Annie empowers the veteran to keep on track with their weight loss efforts or from preventing weight gain if weight maintenance is the goal. And I have witnessed just that, successful weight loss and weight maintenance with this tool.

I will share with you two stories in which Annie has helped to support veterans' weight management goals. The first is Veteran A, who is a 54-year-old veteran with newly diagnosed Type 2 Diabetes. He started in TeleMOVE! with a starting weight of 275 pounds, a BMI of 36 and an A1C of 6.5%. After completing two cycles of TeleMOVE!, he asked to participate less often than daily as he traveled often and didn't always have access to the internet or a scale.

We completed the consent for Annie, and he began participation. He submits his weight twice a week and receives a motivational message three days a week. He meets monthly for a MOVE! telephone appointments and overall, he has achieved an 11% weight loss, and has reduced his A1C to 6.1%.

Veteran B is a 67-year-old veteran who started participation in MOVE! weekly group and then transitioned to TeleMOVE! After graduating from TeleMOVE! and reaching his goal weight, he wanted to continue support through the program, and he started participation in Annie.



Overall, he has lost 30 pounds and achieved 15% weight loss. Annie has helped him maintain his weight loss in addition to monthly MOVE! follow-up phone appointments.

Overall, the Annie weight management protocol has been a valuable tool for support and accountability as veterans work towards their weight management goals. Annie helps to empower the veteran, promote self-care and enhances active partnerships with their healthcare team. There are some additional resources here on this page. And then-

Micah Azzano: Excellent. Thank you. It's great. At this time, we are going to be taking additional questions and we've actually had quite a few questions come through. I'll go ahead and start with one. I think someone answered it in the chat but just because I saw it asked by several participants. Who reviews the responses or the data and information that veterans send back?

Melissa Treinen: Sorry, can you repeat that question?

Micah Azzano: Yeah. We've had several people ask, who reviews the data and information that veterans send back through Annie?

Melissa Treinen: Okay, so who reviews the information? The clinician will review the information and the data submitted. On my end I receive the information and do look at that information.

Micah Azzano: Okay, great. And another question that came in is, what if I don't have a smartphone?

Melissa Treinen: Great question. If you even have a flip phone, you can participate. No smartphone is needed as long as you can text message, you can participate.

Micah Azzano: Excellent. Another question that was asked earlier is, how does someone become Annie trained?

Melissa Treinen: To become Annie trained, you can... I'm just going to click back here to the one slide where it has the Annie SharePoint information. Right here, you can go to the Annie For Clinicians and visit this site, Annie Implementation. You can find your site locally and find your Connected Health staff and they can help you with that.

Micah Azzano: Excellent. Another question that came in is, would I be able to participate through My HealthVet?

Melissa Treinen: That is a great question, and I do not know the answer to that. There might be someone else on the call here that might have more information.



Micah Azzano: Okay. We can definitely follow-up on that question in the chat with someone from our team. Another question that came in is, can we use the info/data for a CPRS note or does it automatically populate.

Melissa Treinen: It will not automatically populate but you can copy that information into your details as you stated, weight history for instance.

Micah Azzano: Okay, great. And I think there are other questions coming in about pamphlets and resources on Annie. I'm going to be posting some into the chat shortly. Melissa, can you talk a little bit about, we talked about MOVE! Coach, and there's also the MOVE! Coach app and there's some integration there with Annie. Can you kind of suggest how these tools work together and which veterans maybe you would suggest combining these tools for maybe, would you prescribe to a younger veteran versus an older one or what you think kind of works better with the different groups?

Melissa Treinen: Sure. The MOVE! Coach app is another resource. It's an app that offers self-management diaries and includes weight diaries and physical activity diaries for daily tracking. On slide 16 of this presentation, you will find a link with more information about that app. But as far as using some of these tools available, I like to learn how comfortable the veteran is with technology and go from there. I have found that among all ages, more and more are familiar with and using smart phones and texting function.

If someone is not very comfortable with using apps, for instance, if they were interested in self-monitoring with food and physical activity tracking, we may suggest using a paper log versus the online apps available. If they really do enjoy the technologies available, they might use Annie to submit the information and they might use a combination with the MOVE! Coach app with tracking their intake and activity for the day.

Micah Azzano: Great. Thank you. And there are a couple of questions here. One is they're asking if you can tell them how veterans can stop Annie?

Melissa Treinen: Yes. If they are wanting to end participation in Annie, then they simply respond to Annie with the word, stop, and that will end their participation in the program. Initially, they do receive a welcome message when signing up for Annie and then will have to respond with the word, start, and that will begin their participation. And I see there are, I don't know if we want to open the lines or not but some of these questions might be able to be answered by some of the Connected Care staff too.

Micah Azzano: Okay, hold on. We'll try to open up some of the lines. I would ask that everyone on the phone unless you're speaking to please mute your phone line so we don't have any additional feedback or background noise. Okay. The phone lines have been unmuted. Charles, I saw that you had an answer to some of these questions if you wanted to bring your input.



Charles: Yes, there was a question and I'll try to scroll back through. I saw this, there was a My HealtheVet question. Oh, and I think somebody actually answered it. Yes, My HealtheVet and Annie are not integrated at this time. Annie is a standalone like My HealtheVet is a standalone. And with that, all the information it is owned, something I like to convey is that Annie is in fact owned by the VA. It is a VA program like My HealtheVet that the VA has created for the benefit of veterans' self-care as well as clinicians having an intervention tool to work with their vets with.

That was one of the questions. And then the other question was, there was a question about who is the POC or who at each facility generally trains as well as sets veterans up with Annie? What I will say is that, that varies from facility to facility. But I will allow Melissa, who I commend and has been remarkable in taking Annie and running with it and I'll let her talk about her experience from when she first heard about Annie and how she began to implement it in her practice. Melissa, can you give a little background on that?

Melissa Treinen: I can, thanks. As I mentioned before, Annie was implemented at our site or available at our site back in 2016 during the pilot testing phase. And I found that as an opportunity to use it for those who's the first time to work with Annie. I used it with veterans who were graduating from TeleMOVE! for continued support. And now not only use it for veterans who graduate from TeleMOVE! but can use it also to support those working within the MOVE! Program with their weight management goals.

Charles: Thank you Melissa, and also similar to... oops, sorry.

Micah Azzano: I know I since I...

Charles: I was going to say similar to, Melissa...

Micah Azzano: Okay, you can go ahead.

Charles: Yep. I was going to say similar to Melissa, we have other disciplined individuals that work in different disciplines that do the exact same thing. We have a one-hour clinician training which is actually, the slide deck is actually available on our SharePoint site and the Annie POCs have been trained, have been through train the trainer and know how to now train clinicians on using Annie. And that's the route that the Office of Connected Care took. Where they train the trainer to make sure that every basin had a POC that could train other POCs within facilities. And then those POCs once trained would be able to train the clinicians at their facilities.

I say that but in addition to that I will also want to mention it, there are individuals out there that this site is not necessarily at the point where they have established a POC that is ready. If you need assistance or want some help, reach out to the Annie team and we will help you troubleshoot and find out who can train you and get you up and going with Annie. And I see Laurie, is putting some information out there thank you.



Micah Azzano: Thank you, Charles. All right, thank you. I'm going to go ahead and in the interest of time re-mute the phone lines. I would encourage you if you do have information that you would like to add the conversation to please type it into the chat function. There's a lot of great information as well as great questions coming through in that chat. I highly encourage you to be monitoring that as well as listening in while we're answering some of these questions. The phone lines are again muted. Well, we have some questions that came in. One of them is, when a veteran texts back, where does that text message go?

Melissa Treinen: The text message will go back to the Annie system where the clinician can log into and view that information. It's stored in that Annie system.

Micah Azzano: Okay, great. Which clinician at your site, and I think we've kind of answered this a bit, but which clinicians at your site are in charge of setting up Annie for patients on these dieticians, health coaches, HBCs, et cetera.

Melissa Treinen: At our site there's a variety of clinicians that use Annie. As long as they are Annie trained clinicians, they should be able to help veterans assign these protocols. At our site we have got dieticians, we've got pharmacists. There might be more than I'm missing as well.

Micah Azzano: Okay. And we kind of talked about this earlier, but another question that came in is about how long, or how long can a veteran do Annie for?

Melissa Treinen: And that's a great question. It is a 30-day protocol, however, if a veteran is finding benefit from it and they want to continue, they sure can. I have veterans that really do enjoy the accountability with the program, so they do request to continue the protocol.

Micah Azzano: Excellent. How are patients made aware that this is not an emergency program that someone will respond to their injuries?

Melissa Treinen: That is included as part of the consent in the program. There is a short consent that clinicians do discuss with a veteran and that is one of the points in the consent. Veterans are made aware that it is a self-care program and Annie is not the right place to ask for help, and they are directed to contact their healthcare team if they do have any questions or concerns.

Micah Azzano: Excellent. How, if at all, do clinicians capture workload related to CPRS, and are they encouraged to put info from Annie into CPRS notes?

Melissa Treinen: With the veterans that I see within this protocol, they are seen for follow up. I follow up with them through some of the avenues within the MOVE! Program, for instance. That would be part of... might be part of a scheduled visit. I would see too possibly workload, as far as workload credit, a medical record review as well.



Micah Azzano: Excellent. And there's still some questions coming in. I'm looking through to see which ones we haven't answered quite yet. What documentation is required by staff when a patient participates in Annie?

Melissa Treinen: That is kind of a local decision at your site too. Our site locally, we do have a NCCRS. We have note titles and initial notes that are included when veterans do enroll.

Micah Azzano: Excellent. And I think we've answered the majority of the questions. Well, thanks for that, two just came through. My HealthVet coordinators... Oh, sorry. That's more a statement, that's been one of the comments, sorry about that. I'm actually going to hand it over really quick to Elaine Owens. She is going to talk a little bit about the upcoming Integrated Care Series on Weight Management, that will talk about MOVE! Coach and several other technologies. Elaine, are you on?

Elaine Owens: Yes, I am and thank you Melissa, for such a great presentation. On December the 18th, we will be repeating the Integrated Care Series Virtual Care for Weight Management. It will be presented by Lori Colson and Christina Armstrong, and we will be talking about other Connected Care modalities and programs to assist veterans with their weight management. We will be offering ACCME, and ANCC CEU, and registration information will be available soon. And for additional information you can contact Sherron. And we hope you can join this wonderful presentation.

Micah Azzano: Thank you very much, Elaine.

Elaine Owens: And...

Micah Azzano: I don't have any questions at this time. I don't see any questions coming in right now either through the chat. With that, I want to go ahead and thank everyone for joining us. Thank you, Melissa, for all the wonderful information. Up on the screen right now you will see a link to a survey, and you can give us some feedback. Tell us what topics you would like us to cover in the coming month.

I would like to tell you that next month we, on December 19th, our next discussion series will feature Dr. Leonie Heyworth, who will be talking about Connected Care Tools with Disaster Preparedness. I really encourage you to join us next month again on December 19th at 3:00 PM. Again, no more questions at this time, so I'll say thank you Melissa, and thank you everyone for joining us. I hope you all have a wonderful day and a wonderful Thanksgiving next week.

Melissa Treinen: Thank you.

