



HeroCare  
Connect™

 Deborah®  
Heart and Lung Center

+  Cooper  
University Health Care

## 2017-2018 Program Overview



*Connecting Military  
Families to Quality  
Healthcare*



## A Message from Our Leaders

When Cooper University Health Care joined Deborah Heart and Lung Center to launch the HeroCare Connect™ program in April 2017, it formalized a longstanding, shared commitment to ensure that New Jersey's servicemen and -women and their families receive the highest quality specialty healthcare in a timely manner.

This unique collaboration, created by the joined forces of two unaffiliated hospitals, has taken this commitment to the next level.

HeroCare Connect provides access to specialty medical services for active military and their families at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JB MDL), retirees, activated National Guardsmen, their family members, and veterans across South Jersey and the surrounding region—a patient population of more than 263,000. Veterans Administration (VA)-eligible patients using the Veterans Choice Program—and those who served but receive their care from community providers—also use HeroCare Connect to access the care they need.

What distinguishes this program is its concierge approach which offers initial appointments within 24 to 48 hours. With a single phone call to our dedicated service center—staffed by knowledgeable, compassionate navigators who handle every detail—the region's active duty and retired military, their family members, and veterans get streamlined access to outstanding specialty care when, and where, they need it.

Since June 2017, HeroCare Connect has coordinated initial specialist appointments for nearly 3,000 individual patients at Deborah Heart and Lung Center, Cooper University Health Care, and other community-based specialists.

Through this program, we are able to make a real difference each and every day, connecting active duty, retired military, their families, and veterans with vital resources and timely access to the care they need and deserve. Because of this success, the program was awarded the Community Outreach Award from the Health Research and Educational Trust of the New Jersey Hospital Association.

While the numbers show that this program is off to a very positive start in keeping our promise to our servicemen and -women, it's the impact we're having on an individual level that is exceptionally gratifying. We look forward to further growth in service to our military members and their families.

Proudly,



Joseph Chirichella  
President and CEO  
Deborah Heart and Lung Center



Anthony J. Mazzarelli, MD, JD, MBE  
Co-President  
Cooper University Health Care



Kevin M. O'Dowd, JD  
Co-President  
Cooper University Health Care



# The HeroCare Connect™ Program

**H**eroCare Connect is a first-of-its-kind collaboration between two nationally renowned medical centers of excellence: Deborah Heart and Lung Center and Cooper University Health Care. HeroCare Connect's mission is to provide prompt, seamless access to specialty care appointments for active duty, retired military, their dependents, and veterans in New Jersey and the surrounding region.

These heroes have earned it, and deserve nothing less.

## The Very Real Needs Addressed

While excellent primary care (including basic gynecology and pediatrics) is available to active military, retirees, and their families through the 87th Medical Group on JB MDL, specialty care is referred to providers in the community. HeroCare Connect links those needing advanced specialty care consultation with appropriate providers at a convenient time and location for the patient. The HeroCare Connect team of navigators does anything and everything they can to meet the needs of the patient and the patient's family and to ensure they have available information needed for the providers, and the insurer.

Veterans can experience difficulty accessing care through their local VA due to extremely high demand for services. VA wait times in excess of 30 days and out as far as 120 days are common for certain specialties. By partnering with local VA offices, HeroCare Connect is able to offer access to vital care faster.

In addition, active duty military men and women often need specialty medical clearances quickly prior to deployment. HeroCare Connect understands—and makes it happen.

## Personal, One-Stop Resource For Scheduling Specialty Care—Fast

The heart of HeroCare Connect is the Patient Service Center located

on the Deborah campus. It's staffed five days a week by skilled navigators who have extensive healthcare and customer service experience, and who understand how TriCare and the VA work. Their sole focus is to personally manage each and every appointment request—and to help patients find providers who will book those appointments in 48 hours or less.

And all it takes is a single phone call from the patient or provider to start the process.

## Concierge Model of Service

Timely scheduling of specialist appointments is just one part of what the HeroCare Connect team does. The navigators tailor solutions to each patient's unique needs, which can include:

- Establishing eligibility for care
- Obtaining insurance authorizations
- Ensuring that appropriate forms are completed
- Arranging diagnostic imaging and laboratory testing
- Setting up preadmission testing, procedures, and follow-up visits
- Coordinating referrals to other specialists
- Making sure that reports are sent to the right places
- Identifying the most appropriate specialist
- Scheduling care in the most convenient location
- Securing transportation and other support services when needed

It's the concierge approach to service that means everything possible is taken care of to enable each and every HeroCare Connect patient to receive prompt and convenient healthcare. It takes the hassle out of healthcare, enabling patients and their families to focus on their health instead of managing paperwork and navigating an often impersonal healthcare bureaucracy.

It starts with a single phone call.

## Extensive Specialty Resources

Through the combined resources of Deborah Heart and Lung Center and Cooper University Health Care, HeroCare Connect gives patients access to providers in more than 75 adult and pediatric specialties at over 100 locations throughout South Jersey and into Pennsylvania. These specialties include:

- Ambulatory Surgery
- Balance issues
- Bariatric Surgery
- Behavioral Health
- Cardiology
- Dermatology
- Diagnostic Radiology Imaging
- Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT)
- Endocrinology
- Gastroenterology
- Hematology
- Infectious Disease
- Nephrology
- Neurology
- Neuropsychology
- Neurosurgery
- OB/GYN
- Oncology
- Oral and Maxillofacial
- Orthopedics
- Pain Management
- Palliative Care
- Pediatrics
- Perinatology
- Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
- Podiatry
- Psychiatry
- Pulmonology
- Rheumatology
- Sleep Center
- Trauma Specialists
- Urology
- Vascular Services
- Vein Center
- Wound Care

When care is not available within the timeframe, the HeroCare Connect Patient Service Center team reaches out to other providers to meet patient need.

## The Partners Behind HeroCare Connect™

Deborah Heart and Lung Center and Cooper University Health Care have a long history of working with active duty military, retirees, their families, and veterans.

## A Patient's Story

U.S. Army Vietnam veteran Bob Iasillo, of Bayville, NJ, began having more frequent and intense episodes of tachycardia (extremely rapid heart rate) until, in 2016, he ended up in his local hospital emergency room. While there, a cardiac catheterization revealed that in addition to his heart rhythm problem, he had three major blockages in his coronary arteries—including a 100 percent blockage in his left anterior descending artery, the “widow maker.”

Doctors tried inserting a stent, but the artery was too heavily calcified. The VA directed Iasillo to a hospital in Manhattan for recommended rotablation to remove the plaque. Testing for the cause of his arrhythmia was inconclusive. Because of the risks, doctors declined to treat his blockages.

Iasillo's circumstances were compounded by his cardiologist moving, landing on a six-month cardiology wait list, and changes in the VA Choice Program.

Finally his daughter reached out to HeroCare Connect. Navigator Chris Cattani, LPN, quickly scheduled him to see a Deborah specialist who placed stents in his coronary arteries to restore blood flow. She also arranged appointments with a Deborah electrophysiologist to address his heart rhythm problems.

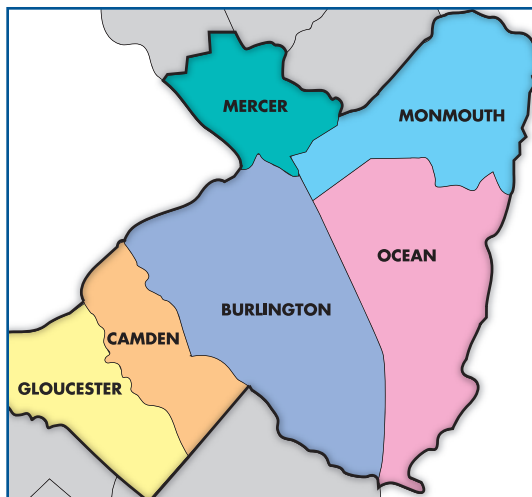
“The HeroCare Connect program is great,” Iasillo says. “I’d recommend others take advantage of it to get the care they need.”



- **Deborah Heart and Lung Center** in Browns Mills, New Jersey, is a nationally recognized top cardiovascular hospital and New Jersey's only cardiac, pulmonary, and vascular specialty hospital. Since opening its doors in 1922, Deborah has enjoyed a national reputation for patient satisfaction with the highest scores in the state, a robust research program, the second largest CV fellowship training program in the country, and generous philanthropy. Located one mile south of Fort Dix – now JB MDL, the nation's only tri-service military base – Deborah has been a trusted resource for military patients and their families for nearly a century.
- **Cooper University Health Care**, established in 1887, is one of South Jersey's largest health systems, with South Jersey's only Level I Trauma Center and Level II Pediatric Trauma Center, as well as the respected MD Anderson Cancer Center at Cooper. An academic medical center with more than 75 specialties, Cooper is one of only four hospitals in the nation to provide clinical training to the elite Special Operations Combat Medics (SOCOM) from the Special Operations Command, including the U.S. Army's Special Forces, Navy SEALs, and Marine RECON.

Both healthcare organizations are members of the Veterans Choice Program, which gives veterans the option to receive care at community-based providers such as Deborah and Cooper.

#### HeroCare Connect™ Service Area



Deborah Heart and Lung Center and Cooper University Health Care serve patients from all 21 counties in NJ with a concentration in the central south areas:

In these counties, there are:

- More than 50,000 Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, Reservists, National Guard, civilian personnel and their family members living and working on and around Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst

#### Chris Cattani, LPN HeroCare Connect™ Patient Service Specialist/Navigator



**"I'm still working because of this program," says Chris Cattani, who has been a nurse since 1968. "I get such a feeling of satisfaction knowing I helped someone. I never try to do things the quick way, but the right way—the way that benefits the patient. They've been through enough; I want to make their load easier."**

**"I'm an Army brat; my father was in the military for 20 years, so this is personal for me. I say a little prayer every day, to let me make a difference."**

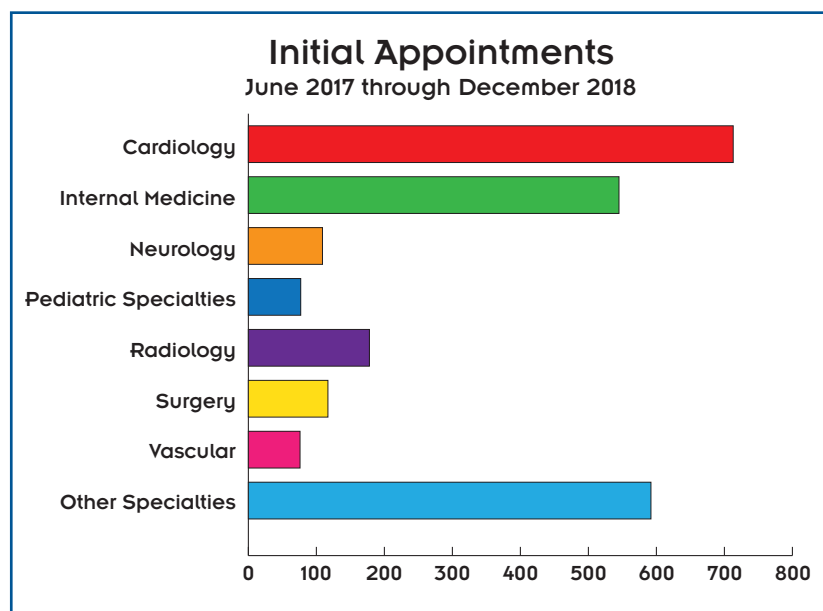
- More than 60,000 military retirees living within a 50-mile radius of JB MDL
- Approximately 153,000 VA beneficiaries
- An estimated 33,000 unique patients received care at a VA facility in our area and may require a specialty appointment

### HeroCare Connect™ Program Highlights

In its first full year of operation, HeroCare Connect achieved several notable milestones, underscoring the demand for—and value of—the program.

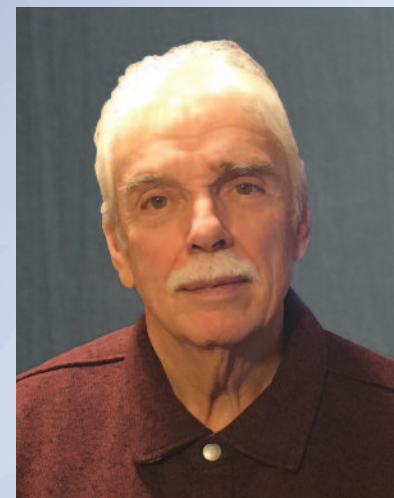
### By the Numbers

- Nearly 3,000 initial appointments were scheduled:



### A Patient's Story

Chuck Stigelman, a U.S. Air Force veteran and a retired Philadelphia Fire Fighter, is active in his South Jersey community. He is a visiting pastor at the Haddon Heights Baptist Church and enjoys playing chess, collecting chess sets, and playing his guitar. When Chuck started experiencing numbness in his hands, he knew he needed to do something if he wanted to continue these activities.



Initially, Stigelman reached out to VA Outsourcing which is designed to connect veterans with medical care close to home and in a timely manner. VA Outsourcing in turn referred Stigelman to HeroCare Connect. Immediately, the HeroCare Connect team scheduled Stigelman to see a Cooper orthopedic hand surgeon. After his consultation, Chuck underwent carpal tunnel surgery at Cooper's Surgical Center in Voorhees.

Stigelman was so impressed with the outcome by Dr. Ramirez and his staff that he opted to have a second carpal tunnel surgery procedure at Cooper.

"I can't say enough about the HeroCare Connect program" says Mr. Stigelman, "Dr. Ramirez, his staff, and the HeroCare Connect team could not have been more accommodating and caring."



## Community Outreach

To help build awareness of HeroCare Connect as a community resource, the program regularly reaches out to active duty military at JB MDL, to veterans' groups, county health departments, American Legion, and VFW posts, as well as the many organizations whose primary focus is the health and well-being of our nation's military. Events at which HeroCare Connect had a presence:

- **Midsummer Night Festival** - The HeroCare Connect team attended this July 2018 event at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, sharing information about the HeroCare Connect program and screening dozens of active duty servicemen and -women and their families, along with veterans and retirees.
- **New Jersey Annual VFW State Conventions** - The HeroCare Connect team attended these events held annually in June at the

Wildwood Convention Center. The team shared vital information about how veterans can more easily navigate the healthcare system and receive the specialty care they need through HeroCare Connect's personalized concierge services.

- **Summerfest** - HeroCare Connect representatives participated in this Mt. Laurel event for veterans, military, and first responders. Over 600 guests enjoyed the day, also benefiting from health screenings and learning about local employment opportunities and military resources.
- **Red, White and Cool Festival** - The HeroCare Connect team operated a booth at this festival at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. Hundreds of U.S. Department of Defense ID cardholders stopped by to learn about the HeroCare Connect program and the services available.





- **Installation Picnic Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst** - The HeroCare Connect team conducted screenings at the Base-wide Installation Picnic in June.
- **2018 Air Show at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst** - This very popular event featured the ACC F-22 Raptor Demo Team, Canadian Forces CF18 Demo Team, and the U.S. Army's famed Golden Knights. Thousands of active duty, retired military, veterans, and their dependents visited the HeroCare Connect booth to learn about the program.
- **Annual Deborah Women's Health EXPO** - HeroCare Connect staff joined Deborah Heart and Lung Center specialists, other health professionals, and an array of vendors to provide health screenings and information to more than 1,000 attendees at the Fountain of Life Center in Burlington.
- **Veterans Springfest** - More than 900 veterans and their guests attended Cooper's annual Veterans Springfest on the fantail of the Battleship New Jersey, at the Camden waterfront. HeroCare Connect staff were there to provide information about HeroCare Connect. The event offered complimentary health screenings, employment information, networking for area military veterans, and a tour of the Battleship.



## On the Horizon

HeroCare Connect's strong performance following its launch, affirms the tremendous demand for quick access to specialty care that the program provides. We plan to continue to refine and grow HeroCare Connect to best serve our active and former military members and their families.

The latter part of 2018 brought changes to the VA appointment process. Deborah Heart and Lung Center and Cooper University Health Care are proud to be part of the VA pilot of Health Share Referral Manager (HSRM), a custom software designed for the VA to directly schedule specialty appointments with providers. The HeroCare Connect Patient Service Center staff is uniquely qualified to provide valuable feedback that will help shape the final rollout of the new program by the VA to all providers.

HeroCare Connect plans to continue the service and relationships developed with the 87th Medical Group facility at JB MDL and stand ready to assist in any and every way possible.

## Maggie Mary, Program Manager HeroCare Connect™ Patient Service Center

While Maggie's job is to oversee the day-to-day operations of HeroCare Connect's Patient Service Center, what she really does goes far beyond staffing, scheduling, handling calls, identifying the resources individual callers need, and representing the program at community outreach events.

She and her staff of skilled navigators truly *walk the walk* when it comes to delivering on the program's promise. And that comes down to serving those who have served our country in a way no other program does.

"When people first hear what we do, they often think, 'Oh, you answer the phone,' " she continues. "But it's so much more than that. This is a place where people can get the answers they need, whether someone is active duty, retired, or a family member. And we help them in every way we can, every day."

And those answers turn into action—getting appointments scheduled with appropriate medical specialists within 48 hours and managing a myriad of other details to expedite appointments, from handling related insurance issues, following up on medical records and forms, to coordinating follow-up visits and referrals.

Married to a veteran, Maggie understands firsthand just how valuable this kind of resource is.

"When my husband retired from the military, he felt like he was just out there alone, with no place to turn if he had a healthcare issue," she relates. "If I knew then what I know now, it would have been so much easier."

"We're making a difference – one person at a time."





*Caring for Those  
Who Serve*





[HeroCareConnect.org](http://HeroCareConnect.org) • 1-866-9-HERO-CARE (1-866-943-7622)