

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



 **HeroCare  
Connect™**

 **Deborah®**  
Heart and Lung Center

 **Cooper**  
University Health Care

On the cover: HeroCare Connect patients Joseph Godfrey (top) and Lenny Yanchar (bottom)

## ***Heroes Helping Heroes***

During the coronavirus surge in New Jersey, the Air Force Thunderbirds, Navy Blue Angels, and the Freedom Wing of the 514th Air Mobility Wing from Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst conducted hospital flyovers to honor front line healthcare workers including the HeroCare Connect team and providers at Deborah Heart and Lung Center and Cooper University Health Care.



HeroCare Connect™ is a partnership between Deborah Heart and Lung Center and Cooper University Health Care that delivers timely specialty medical care appointments to veterans, active duty military, retirees, and their families.

# Heroes Helping Heroes

## WELCOME

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2020 was an unprecedented year. The COVID-19 pandemic turned our world upside down. Nowhere was that more apparent than in the provision of healthcare.

At times, it was tough, but Deborah Heart and Lung Center and Cooper University Health Care weathered the COVID storm, showing deep resilience, creating innovation under stress, and offering care and compassion to our fellow human beings—all under circumstances unparalleled in recent times.


This past year, our healthcare workers became our new national heroes. For us, at HeroCare Connect, these essential personnel joined another group of national heroes—our esteemed military.

Since 2017, HeroCare Connect has provided personalized concierge navigation services to active duty military, veterans, retirees, and their dependents, connecting them with quality specialty care, prompt appointments, and physician resources close to home.

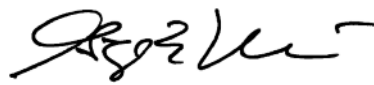
Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, when access to medical care was limited by State-issued executive orders, the HeroCare Connect team made sure that the needs of our military patients were met, arranging telemedicine appointments and transportation as needed. Our team was determined to help our uniformed men and women to connect with their doctors and receive the care they needed, despite the barriers presented by COVID-19.

We are proud to share our 2020 Annual Report and to highlight the many accomplishments of the HeroCare Connect program last year, share the support of our State and private grant partners, and tell some of the stories of the lives we have touched. It was a tough year for everyone, but our healthcare team rose to the occasion and continued to serve our military heroes.

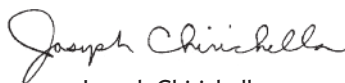
This report is truly about Heroes Helping Heroes and is a testament to the dedication of healthcare workers, who heal, listen, and care, and to the unwavering commitment of the members of our military, who continually rise to the call to serve and protect. To all of our heroes, we are truly grateful.



George S. Loesch  
Chairman  
Deborah Heart and Lung Center



George E. Norcross III  
Chairman  
Cooper Health System



Joseph Chirichella  
President/CEO  
Deborah Heart and Lung Center



Anthony J. Mazza, MD, JD, MBE  
Co-President/CEO  
Cooper University Health Care



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



## HEROES HELPING HEROES

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HeroCare Connect is a first-of-its-kind collaboration between two nationally renowned health systems, Deborah Heart and Lung Center and Cooper University Health Care. HeroCare Connect provides prompt, seamless access to specialty care appointments for active duty military, veterans, retirees, and their dependents through a “one-stop” comprehensive, personalized navigation call center.

Launched in 2017, HeroCare Connect has remained steadfast in its unwavering commitment to provide access to superior medical care for our country’s military heroes. This year, however, the pandemic turned the tables on the HeroCare Connect team and our front line healthcare workers became the country’s new heroes. Yet, no matter how hard the task at hand seemed given lockdowns, disruption of scheduling elective procedures, new health and safety regulations, etc. HeroCare Connect never lost sight of the healthcare needs of the heroes who serve our country. Despite the pandemic, there was a 9% increase in 2020 referrals to the HeroCare Connect program, as our team continues to touch the lives of thousands of military families.

### Helping Active Duty Military

HeroCare Connect is uniquely positioned to serve the needs of active duty military and their families stationed at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JB MDL).

- Close partnership with the 87th Medical Group at JB MDL
- Supplementing the primary care available at the Base clinic
- Personal, one-stop resource, accessed with a single phone call
- Patients work with personal concierge navigators
- Linking servicemen and women to over 75 specialty community providers
- Appointments scheduled within 24-48 hours
- All paperwork and scheduling handled: clearing insurances, scheduling appointments, follow-up reports
- Liaison between patient and provider
- Federally identified civilian medical partner to provide rapid deployment and readiness medical clearances
- Tested efficient and comprehensive medical processing system for mobilization and demobilization.

### Helping Veterans

Deborah Heart and Lung Center and Cooper University Health Care have long been at the forefront of delivering outstanding medical care to the region’s veterans. This century-long compassionate mission has culminated in HeroCare Connect which provides:

- Timely, specialized medical care specific to the unique needs of veterans

- Meticulous patient service specialists/navigators who track veterans' multiple health issues, to ensure nothing is overlooked
- Empathy towards veterans who often have felt forgotten and left behind
- A track record of longstanding participation with the VA in PC3 program, the Veterans Choice program, and now a preferred provider in the VA Community Care program
- Strong partnerships with the VA offices in Philadelphia, PA; East Orange, NJ; and Wilmington, DE
- A vital link for veterans seeking faster specialty medical care in the community

## Patient Testimonial

*Lenny Yanchar likes to keep in touch with his friends. They also communicate a lot about issues that matter to veterans, especially healthcare.*

*The 74-year old retired salesman, who has three grown children and a grandchild, has had a long relationship with the VA system.*

*"I have COPD and have needed pulmonary rehab," he says. "Then I needed surgery for lung cancer."*

*But Lenny knows what he is eligible for. "A few times I ended up with a VA doctor. Sometimes you can't wait two months or longer for specialty care. Now, when I make an appointment and they tell me it will be three months out, I can ask to go through the VA Community Care Program. That's how I came to HeroCare Connect."*

*When Lenny needed treatment for his COPD, then treatment for cancer and a back surgery, HeroCare Connect was the perfect solution each time. Chris Cattani, patient service specialist/navigator and Maggie Mary, program manager, were able to schedule Lenny's appointments at both Deborah and Cooper to meet his exact medical specialty needs.*

*"I have nothing but positive things to say about this program. I don't care if it's rehab, a scan, or blood work. I have always been treated great. Always with respect. Always very pleasant to me. This team does it all for me."*

*It is good news that he keeps sharing with his buddies. "We always communicate," he says.*

*And the bonus for Lenny? "It's also great that now I only have to drive 15 minutes for care instead of an hour and 45 minutes to East Orange. It really makes a difference," he explains.*



*Lenny Yanchar with Maggie Mary,  
Program Manager.*



## Helping Retired Military

South Jersey is home to more than 50,000 retired military members. Serving for a short time, or an entire career, former military members and their dependents are offered the full concierge services of HeroCare Connect. Retirees who still feel part of their former military community deserve the respect and care that their service has earned them. At HeroCare Connect, this is a reality as we provide:

- Comprehensive knowledge and insurance expertise with TRICARE, commercial insurance, and Medicare
- Priority access to the highest quality specialty care they deserve
- Navigators with a personal background in military culture
- Healthcare providers who understand the unique health needs of those who have served

## The Healthcare Excellence Backing HeroCare Connect

- **Deborah Heart and Lung Center**, an Alliance Partner of the Cleveland Clinic Heart, Vascular & Thoracic Institute, is a nationally-ranked cardiac center rated the top tier in the country by the Society for Thoracic Surgeons (STS). STS is the gold standard for evaluation of every cardiovascular program in the United States. Deborah is also highly respected for its research and Fellowship programs. Located one mile from JB MDL, Deborah combines expert quality with nearly 100 years of experience serving the military.
- **Cooper University Health Care**, founded over 130 years ago, is the largest academic health system in South Jersey. Cooper is the only Level I Trauma Center, and Level II Pediatric Trauma Center in the region. Cooper's medical team is crucial to the region's health and well-being. Cooper's designation by the federal government as an elite medical team training flagship site for Special Operations Combat Medics (SOCM) reflects Cooper's deep knowledge of the military's needs. Cooper has been recognized two years in a row by Healthgrades for Patient Safety and also recognized by *Newsweek* for World's Best Hospitals for Orthopaedics.

## Patient Experience

“Our story starts when we found out my husband, a veteran of both the Army and the Navy, had coronary artery blockages following a heart catheterization. I reached out to the VA and was transferred to HeroCare Connect. On this day our lives changed. The phone was answered by a woman who said, ‘I’m writing all of this down. I will reach out to the VA. We work with them all the time.’ When she told me her name was Angel, I knew I just had an encounter with—a real angel.

Thanks to our Angel, we navigated the VA process that can be long and complex. She maintained constant contact with the VA and received the approval to be treated. Angel had the compassion, empathy, understanding, confidence, and knowledge to see this through from the moment she picked up the phone to the moment she scheduled his appointment, showing dedication and commitment to our military and their families.”  
– Patricia C.



Angel Wiesniewski  
Patient Service Specialist

## **MAKING VIRTUAL CONNECTIONS AND PROVIDING TRANSPORTATION**

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, the HeroCare Connect team recognized that our patients, particularly older and more vulnerable veterans and retirees, were worried about contracting the virus when leaving home. The HeroCare Connect team also recognized how vitally important it was to continue providing care to these patients, especially since many of them have underlying health conditions. Expansion of telemedicine services and scheduling rides for patients needing transportation kept our patients safely connected to their healthcare providers.

### ***Telemedicine***

Deborah and Cooper were quick to adapt to telemedicine appointments, the safest way to make sure patients stayed connected to their physicians. Deborah and Cooper's telemedicine capabilities include:

- Quick and easy virtual appointments on a smartphone, tablet, or computer
- Ongoing medical continuity and follow-up
- Schedule diagnostic testing appointments
- Ongoing conversations between patients and physicians
- A way to stay current with scheduled specialist visits, maintaining continuity of care
- An opportunity to report on symptoms, discuss medications, adjust doses and disease management as needed
- A way to maintain peace of mind about current health status and conditions
- An opportunity to strengthen medical connections, even when it doesn't seem possible to see a doctor

### ***Transportation Services***

Finding a ride to a medical appointment became even more difficult for many HeroCare Connect patients in 2020. Dependable friends and neighbors were nervous about leaving their homes during the pandemic. However, the HeroCare Connect team's understanding of the vital connection between ongoing health and regular visits with specialists, created a courtesy ride program, specific to both Deborah and Cooper, to fit the individual needs of each patient requiring a ride to see a doctor. The transportation initiative has been a tremendous help to many veterans and retirees who need travel assistance. Transportation services:

- Provide continuity for critically important follow-up care
- Remove the burden from friends and neighbors
- Offer rides tailored to specific appointment times
- Remove transportation barriers to healthcare access

## HEROES HELPING HEROES – AND THE PARTNERS WHO MADE IT POSSIBLE

The critical link HeroCare Connect provides in making sure our military heroes have access to timely specialty medical care was boosted in 2020 when the program was awarded two significant grants. These grants underscore the valuable service that the HeroCare Connect program provides and recognizes the Program's three-year track record of outstanding patient satisfaction. The two grants, a private, nonprofit grant from the Nicholson Foundation and a New Jersey State Department of Health grant, provided an opportunity to expand our outreach to the military community.

### ***The Nicholson Foundation***

Designed to help the HeroCare Connect program establish a model for other healthcare providers, the Nicholson Foundation grant is spearheading an analysis of how to best align HeroCare Connect with the requirements of the federal VA Mission Act. The grant provides the opportunity to:



- Track allocation of veteran healthcare dollars for effective delivery of care
- Reduce duplication of federal VA resources
- Streamline utilization of readily available federal resources
- Identify and recommend cost-effective measures for reaching veterans
- Create a proven template to guide other organizations working with veterans

### ***New Jersey Department of Health Integrated Care Grant***

New Jersey's Department of Health is working to reduce disparities in care, increasing access to care, and streamlining the process for active duty military and veterans to receive needed care. By leveraging the State grant, the HeroCare Connect program is able to enhance and expand its comprehensive integrated care network through seven targeted goals, critical to ongoing military wellness:



- Increasing healthcare screenings
- Increasing access to primary care
- Providing assessment and evaluations for behavioral health
- Ensuring timely access to specialty care
- Prioritizing same-day services and appointments within 48 hours
- Serving as a referral resource
- Providing palliative and hospice care as needed



## Patient Testimonial

Joseph and Dorothy Godfrey of Little Egg Harbor have been married for 62 years and have four children, six grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. According to Dorothy, “we have lived a good life.”

That good life, however, did not come without some bumps along the way. After two years in the Army during Vietnam, Joe hit the road, and drove for over 18 years as a Teamster, until one day while driving, when he was only 44 years old, he had to pull over, suffering from a brain stem stroke.

“He was so young,” recalls Dorothy. “It was pretty severe, but Joe was determined to recover and walk again.”

An exercise suggestion to keep talking and moving his right arm likely played a role in his subsequent recovery, much of it spent at the VA.

Years later, Joe had an aneurysm and underwent quadruple bypass surgery. “The surgery was great, but Joe had a lot of complications,” explains Dorothy.

Those complications brought Joe to the HeroCare Connect program, where the wound care clinic at Deborah and the oncology program at Cooper “saved his life,” says Dorothy.

“We always went to the VA in Brooklyn or Staten Island, but going to the hospitals here was so much more convenient. HeroCare Connect works with the VA to get all my appointments and referrals straightened out.”

The HeroCare Connect team, however, has been more than just a medical touchpoint for Joe and Dorothy.

“I was a wreck when we found Joe’s cancer. Chris [Cattani, program navigator] gave me her number and told me to call her anytime, even on the weekend, if I needed to talk. Her heart is so big. And Maggie [Mary, Program Manager] helped me with transportation. I have cataracts, and I can’t drive at night, and because of COVID I wasn’t allowed to be there. Maggie stayed on the phone with me until 6:00 p.m. one night until she was able to get a transport ride home from Joe’s biopsy at the hospital. When the driver came, he was a knight in shining armor. This young man wanted to make sure Joe was warm and comfortable and covered him in four blankets because he was so cold, even though it was in the 80s that day. He even put the heat on to keep him warm and almost carried him into the house. Kudos to that driver.”

“We come from the school of hard knocks, but having people like this helping us has made a world of difference. HeroCare Connect cares about us, and that gives us strength.”

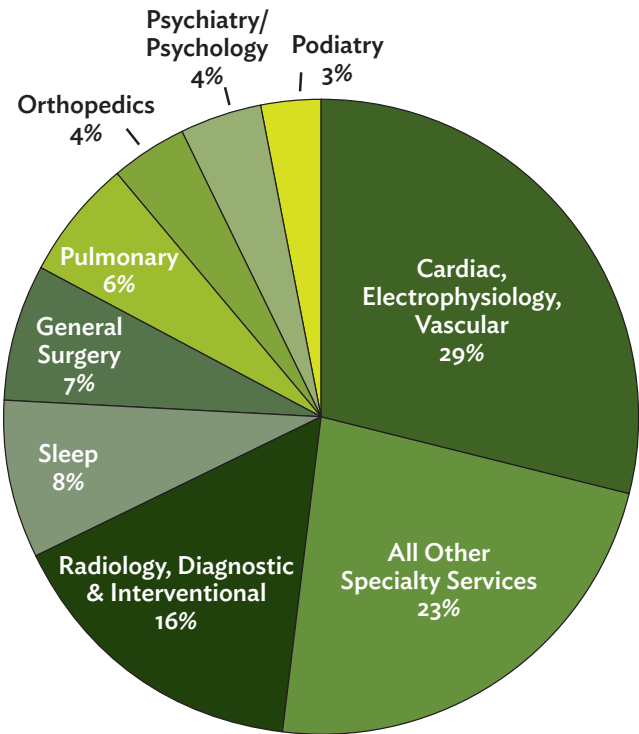


*Dorothy and Joseph Godfrey*

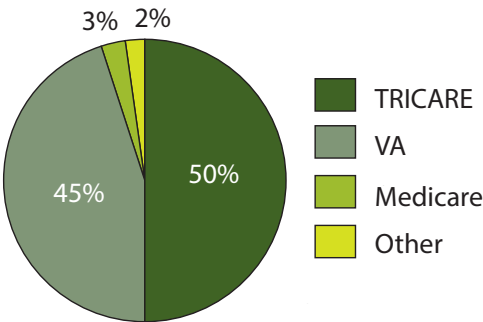
# SERVICES PROVIDED

- Ambulatory Surgery
  - Balance Evaluations
  - 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 Surgery
  - Orthopedics
  - Pain Management
  - Palliative Care
  - Pediatrics
  - Perinatology
- Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
  - Podiatry
  - Psychiatry/Psychology
  - Pulmonology
  - Rheumatology
  - Sleep Center
  - Trauma
  - Urology
  - Vascular Medicine
  - Vein Center
  - Wound Care

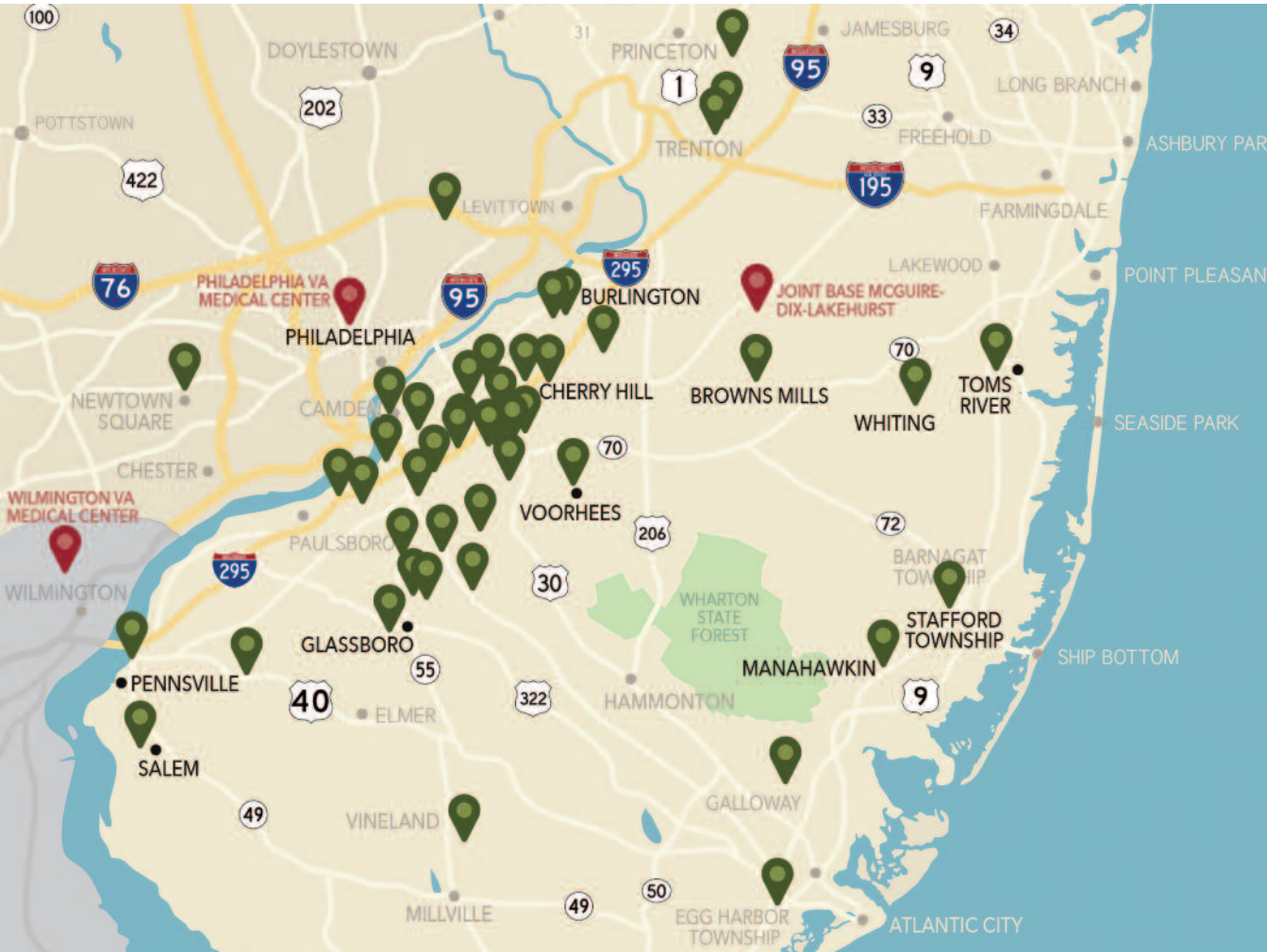
# 2020 APPOINTMENTS BY SPECIALTY



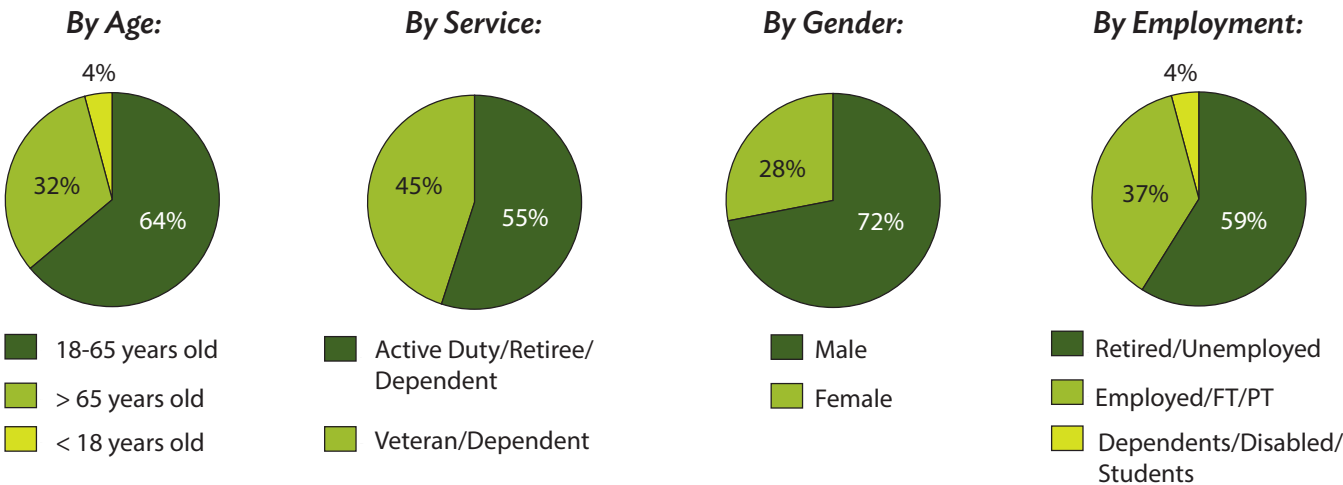
# INSURANCE INFORMATION



# CARE IN THE COMMUNITY



## 2020 HEROCARE CONNECT PATIENTS







HeroCareConnect.org

866-9-HERO-CARE

866-943-7622