Written by By Carolie Watkins Guest Opinion Columnist
Friday, 12 February 2016 03:18

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has developed the National Pain Management Strategy to provide a comprehensive, system-wide approach to meeting the pain management needs of Veterans. Within this plan, most common pain conditions will be evaluated and treated by your primary care provider and your Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT).

Your evaluation will include a physical examination and speaking with your primary care provider and nurse about the daily pattern of your pain, how it affects your activities, thoughts, feelings, and sleep, as well as what relieves and worsens your pain. Additional tests may be required. In most cases, it will be important to continue your normal activities and to maintain healthy living habits while in some cases, use of over-the-counter or prescription medications will be recommended.

Chronic pain is more common among combat Veterans. In fact, over half of these Veterans report some type of pain. Pain is also often associated with traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder in Veterans who served in Iraq, Afghanistan and Vietnam. Managing pain is crucial to improving the health and functioning of our Veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has developed the National Pain Management Strategy to provide a comprehensive, system-wide approach to meeting the pain management needs of Veterans.

Within this plan, most common pain conditions will be evaluated and treated by your primary care provider and your Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT). Your evaluation will include a physical examination and speaking with your primary care provider and nurse about the daily pattern of your pain, how it affects your activities, thoughts, feelings, and sleep, as well as what relieves and worsens your pain.

Additional tests may be required. In most cases, it will be important to continue your normal activities and to maintain healthy living habits while in some cases, use of over-the-counter or prescription medications will be recommended. Your health care team may also suggest physical and psychological therapies and refer you to pain management and other health care specialists.

Activation of this program has not been implemented in New Mexico VA Care system as of writing of this article. Please call you Washington Senator’s and Representative’s for why not?