

VA Hospital Experience, Fargo

Over the past few years, we've heard many terrible stories about the VA hospital system, being unresponsive, making Veterans wait for months to get an appointment and other difficulties. So, this fall I decided to check out our local VA hospital in north Fargo.

With my DD 214 and my insurance cards in hand, I stopped at the hospital and told them I wanted to apply for benefits. Corina filled out my application while I sat in her office, it took about 15 minutes. Of course, it helped that I had my DD 214 with me. She also told me about *myhealthvet* which is an on-line application where I can view and manage my health care, even share information with my civilian doctor. I left the hospital expecting to hear from them in a month or more. My visit was on Wednesday. The following Monday, I received a call from the VA telling me that my application had been processed, approved and I should have already received a packet of information. The packet actually arrived the next day. I was asked if I had any questions and that I would soon receive a call from the local hospital to set up an appointment. One week later, I received that call from the local hospital asking when I wanted to come in for an exam. Since we were on vacation, I told the caller that I would check in when we returned. I went on-line and created my account on *myhealthvet* and later stopped at the hospital to complete the paperwork for sharing data with my civilian doctor. Lana was very helpful and we got it done within 15 minutes. I had my picture taken for my VA card and talked to the reception desk about setting up an appointment. I did not tell anyone that I was testing them nor that I would write an article about the service I received. I never called ahead or scheduled an appointment, I simply walked in and asked for help. All of the people I met with were very helpful, pleasant and efficient. The hospital has volunteers helping veterans find their way at the hospital, some of the volunteers I recognized as fellow VVA members. The one time I stopped in the morning, I was even offered free coffee. Although I've not used it yet, the VA has a pharmacy and offers prescription refills at a very low co-pay. My first appointment will include time with a nurse for lab work, time with one of the doctors and time with a social service representative. I received a call from the VA hospital to set up an appointment. My appointment will be January 12. The same day, I contacted my civilian doctor and asked for an appointment and was scheduled for December 21. I thought that was pretty good timing. In my opinion and from how I was treated, the local VA hospital is extremely good, equal to or better than my civilian doctor experiences. I recommend that all veterans schedule a visit to the VA hospital and learn what they offer. Make sure you bring a copy of your DD 214 with you and information on any insurance you may have.

News: The Beyond the Yellow Ribbon committee will meet on Thursday, December 10 at 8:30 am at the Dilworth VFW.

The Vietnam Veterans of America will meet on Monday, December 21, at 7:00 pm at the Fargo Biltmore.