

Pendleton Town Hall Meeting Notes

Veterans asked about fee basis system and asked why they could not have private hospital or medical care at VA expense. Fee basis system was explained.

One veteran noted that he had never had better health care than he had at the Walla Walla VAMC.

Another veteran asked why the medication a doctor prescribed could not be obtained through the VA pharmacy. The VAMC formulary was explained and that not all medications are provided in that system.

Veteran asked if he still was in VAMC system even though he missed an appointment. He is due to his service connection, but veteran advised to reschedule.

A veteran asked about news reports that veteran disability payments would increase by 25 percent. Explained there was a federal task force that recommended that; however, that recommendation has not been implemented.

Another veteran stated he had an operation at the VA and it was very good. He is happy with care.

A veteran stated he thought the VA claims process paperwork is cumbersome. Panel agreed, but explained that there is a new online system, but be careful using it if there is no receipt of submission to VA.

Veterans concerned about getting local care. Walla Walla VAMC representative explained how the VAMC is contracting with private hospitals in Washington. However, they do not plan to do so in Pendleton for some time. Transportation and distance an issue for Pendleton veterans.

Veterans also feel the current mileage reimbursement rate is too low and does not cover their costs to travel to a VA facility.

Veterans voiced concerns about situation when a veteran has an emergency and then is moved from local hospital to VA approved facility when the veteran becomes stable. The veterans noted that the VA location is too far away for family to get to and/or stay near.

Further, a veteran said when a vet is driven to Portland for an appointment there is no place for the driver or vet to stay. The assumption is this should be at VA costs.

A mother of a veteran shared a success story for her veteran son at the Walla Walla VAMC. She was impressed how well everything was handled.

The veterans noted a need for PTSD/TBI/Depression intervention. Not enough mental health providers in region.