



# American Academy of Sleep Medicine

August 19, 2014

Secretary Robert A. McDonald  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

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Dear Secretary McDonald:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), I congratulate you on your recent confirmation as the eighth Secretary of Veterans Affairs. As the leading professional society in the medical subspecialty of sleep medicine, the AASM represents a membership of 9,000 physicians and other health care providers who are prepared to help the VA serve and honor America's veterans by caring for them and their families.

I am aware of the administrative and logistical challenges facing the Veterans Health Administration as it seeks to provide timely care for 8.76 million veterans each year. Under your leadership, and as empowered by the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014, the VA has swiftly improved access to quality care by expanding private sector referrals for veterans experiencing excessive wait times.

Across the country there are approximately 7,500 board certified sleep medicine physicians and 2,600 AASM accredited sleep disorders centers that are available to provide high quality, patient-centered care targeting common sleep-related problems among veterans, including obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), insomnia and nightmares associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The effective, value-based care provided by sleep specialists can promote positive health outcomes, improve quality of life, and reduce the risk of associated comorbidities such as heart disease and depression.

To learn more about how veterans who are waiting for care can benefit from referral to a local sleep specialist, I encourage you to contact AASM Executive Director Jerome A. Barrett at 630-737-9700. He can explain more about the sleep medicine specialty and discuss how the VA can partner with the Welltrinsic Sleep Network, a national network recently established by the AASM to connect board certified sleep medicine physicians and accredited sleep centers to deliver high-quality, integrated care.

I hope that the VA can work together with private sector sleep specialists to provide veterans the high quality sleep health care that they have earned.

Sincerely,

Timothy I. Morgenthaler, MD  
President

cc: Jerome A. Barrett