As World Hepatitis Day was marked nationwide July 28, the Department of Veterans Affairs reached a significant milestone, having cured more than 100,000 Veterans of chronic hepatitis C virus infection, or HCV, establishing VA as a global leader in diagnosis and treatment.

HCV infection can lead to advanced liver disease, liver cancer and early death. Curing HCV can prevent the development or progression of liver disease, cutting death rates by up to 50 percent.

In 2014, highly effective, less toxic oral antivirals became available. The new drugs have fewer and less severe side effects, revolutionizing HCV treatment. VA adopted use of the new medications within days of FDA approval.

“These efforts have been nothing short of life-saving for tens of thousands of Veterans, and that’s precisely why VA has made diagnosing, treating and curing hepatitis C virus infection such a priority,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie.

Transitioning to civilian life can be hard, but it is possible!

The Providence VAMC Transition and Care Management team can help guide you on your journey. They provide guidance and access to services for returning combat Veterans, including primary care, mental health, social work and Veterans benefits assistance.

You can contact the TCM program at 401-273-7100 ext. 6131 or erin.butler2@va.gov.

To hear other Veterans share their transition experiences, visit https://maketheconnection.net/stories/822.
themselves at the VA access and quality website by visiting https://www.accesstocare.va.gov/

While cautioning that it is still early to draw definitive conclusions, Lilly said that preliminary analysis of community care use since the MISSION Act launch June 6 shows more New England Veterans have been receiving care in the community — which should be expected, since more of them are now eligible — but that Veterans are also making greater use of services provided by VA.

“ Our experience under the Choice Act showed that roughly half of the time, Veterans had to wait longer for an appointment in the community,” Lilly added. “So I want you to know that you can still choose to get your care at VA if you find the wait is longer in the community.”

Lilly then highlighted MISSION Act’s new urgent care benefit, which he said helps fill a gap in care, providing a care in the community option for injuries or illnesses that shouldn’t wait, but which are not life-threatening, supplementing the scheduled care and emergency services Veterans can get at VA medical facilities.

More urgent care providers in the community are being added every day, so for the most recent information on providers in their communities, Veterans can visit the VA website at https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/Urgent_Care.asp.

The VA New England director concluded his remarks by noting that VA Health Care nationwide goes smoke-free for patients, visitors and contractors Oct. 1, and VA employees soon after.