

**CLL SOCIETY**

*Smart Patients Get Smart Care™*

# **Veterans with CLL: How to Get the Benefits You Deserve**

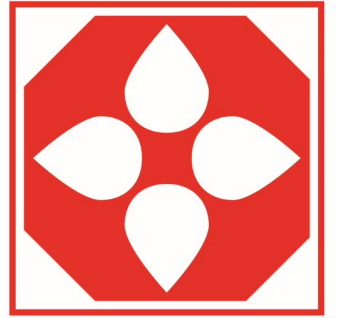
November 5, 2019

10:00 – 11:00 AM PDT / 1:00 – 2:00 PM EDT

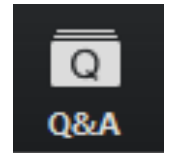
# Housekeeping Notes

Welcome to the CLL Society Webinar!  
The presentation will start momentarily

- Please direct your questions to CLL Society faculty or staff using the Q&A function (located at the bottom of your screen) at any time throughout the presentation
- You will receive a short email survey after the webinar. Your response will help CLL Society plan future webinars.
- The webinar is being recorded and all recorded webinars and the presentation slides will be available on our website via the Support Groups/Education page on [cllsociety.org](http://cllsociety.org).



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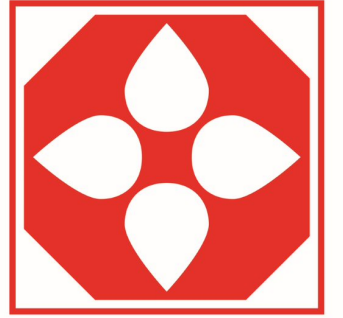
Question and Answer

**Welcome**  
Feel free to ask the host and panelists questions

Type your question here

Send anonymously

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# Speakers

**Moderator:** Brian Koffman, MDCM (retired), DCFP, FCFP, DABFP, MEd

Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Officer,  
CLL Society



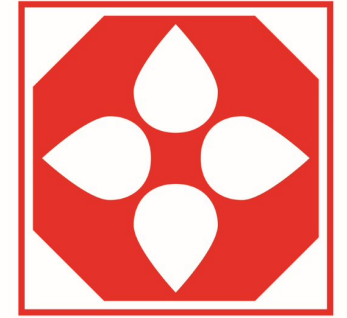
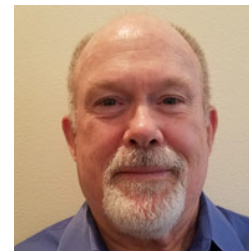
**Speaker:** Edward Ratner, MD

Associate Director, Education and Evaluation  
Minneapolis Geriatrics Research Education Clinical  
Center (GRECC)  
Minneapolis Veterans Administration Medical Center



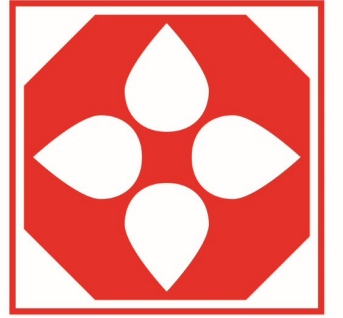
**Speaker: Bruce Wright**

CLL Society Senior Support Group Advisor  
Member, CLL Society Patient Advisory Board



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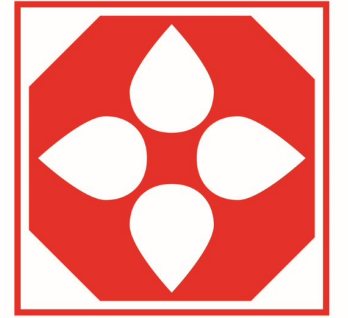
# Conflict of Interest



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- Dr. Ratner has no conflicts of issue related to this presentation.

# Acknowledgements

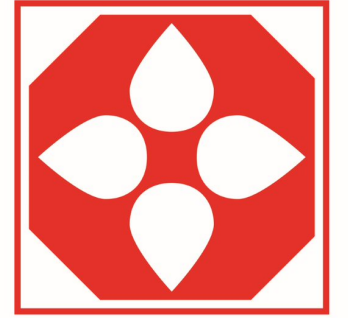


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Thanks for input from:

- Bernadette Heron, Pharm.D.
- Jeremy Wolfsteller
- Bruce Wright
- Neil Patel, MD

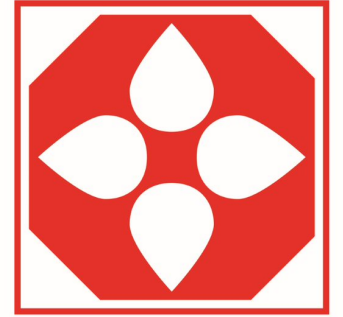
# What is CLL



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- Most common adult blood cancer
- Accumulation of a specific type of white (infection fighting) blood cell
- Related to genetic mutations one is born with, accumulate with aging, and/or are caused by environmental factors
- Life limiting problems include:
  - Diminished ability to fight infections
  - Inability to make other types of blood cells needed to prevent bleeding or maintain oxygen delivery
- Fairly new drug treatments offer prolonged benefits and possibly cures

# Epidemiology of CLL Among Veterans



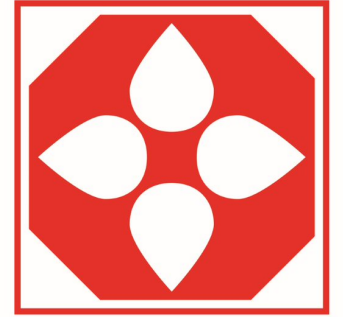
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- Including those not served by VA
  - ~ 5,000- 10,000 new cases/year
  - ~ 20,000 – 40,000 veterans with CLL
- Veterans with CLL currently served at major VA Centers in:

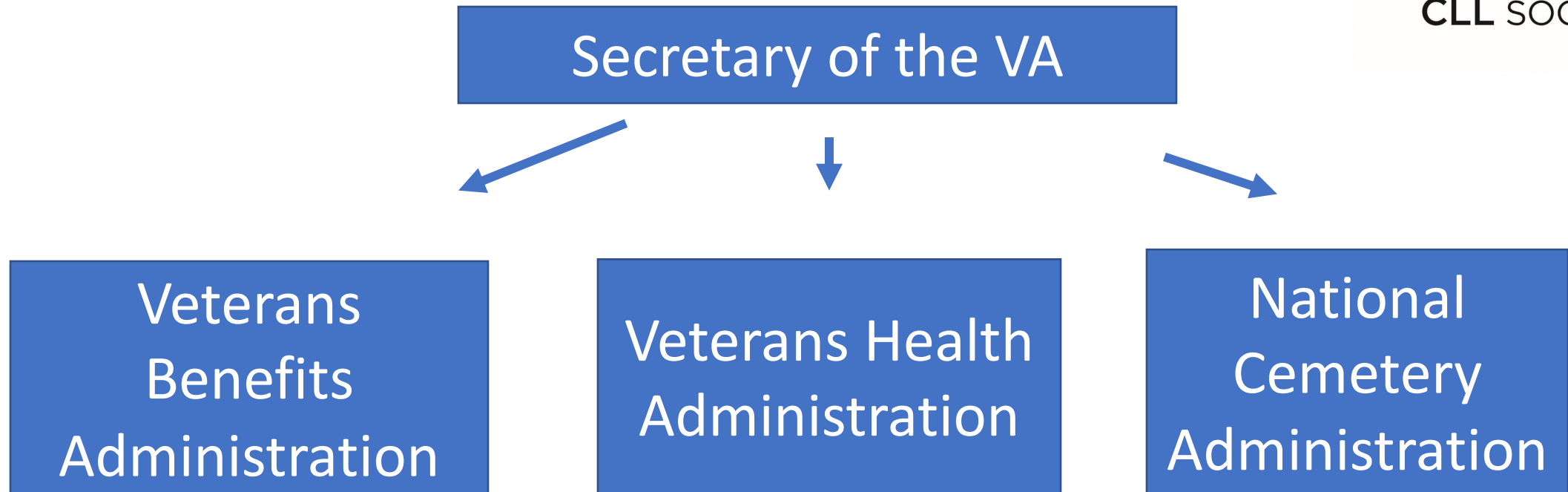
• Atlanta, GA –	200
• Bay Pines, FL –	370
• Greater Los Angeles-	170
• Minneapolis –	320
• St. Louis -	310
• Total-	7100



# Structure of the Veterans Administration

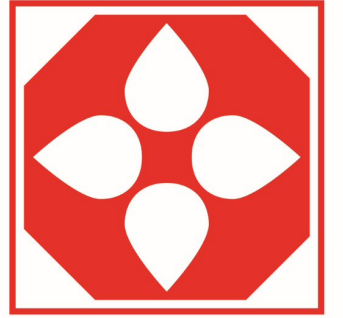


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# VBA benefits for All Eligible Veterans

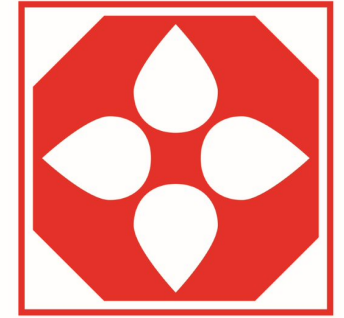
- Pension (minimum income guarantee)
  - for war time veterans only
  - asset limitation < \$127,000
  - assures minimum income of at least
    - ~ \$14,000 for single veteran
    - ~ \$17,000 for married veteran
  - deductions for medical expenses (e.g. expensive CLL drugs)
- Home loans
- Educational benefits
- Vocational rehabilitation



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<https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/>

# CLL related VBA disability and related benefits



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Service in Viet Nam era



Agent Orange exposure



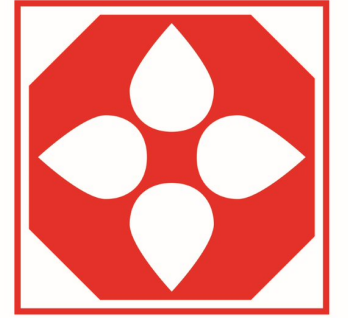
CLL Diagnosis



Presumptive Service Connection

<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/conditions/bcell-leukemia.asp>

# Applying for VBA disability

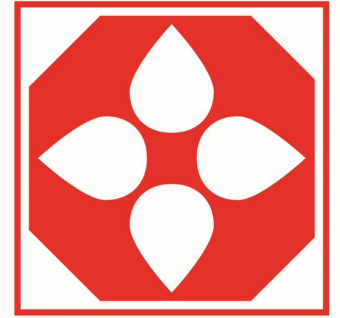


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- Possible to apply oneself –  
see <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/>
- Recommended to get assistance from a Veteran Service Officer at a
  - County Veterans Office
  - Veteran Service Organization (e.g. American Legion, Viet Nam Veterans of America)
  - Or from an Attorney or other accredited representative
- Initial assistance is free

<https://www.va.gov/disability/get-help-filing-claim/>

# Disability Rating for CLL



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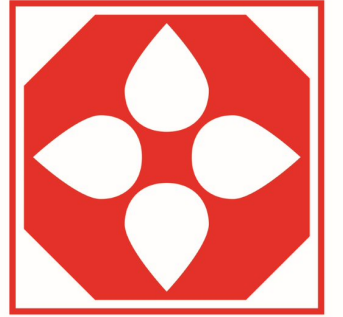
- For early CLL, may be rated as 0% disabled or 100% disabled, depending upon whether such disease is considered “active”
- Swollen lymph nodes, without treatment, may be considered “active”
- Once treatment required, always considered active disease -> 100% disability rating
- Reassessment done 6 months after treatment ends
- Rating of 100% may trigger financial payments and other benefits
- Appeal of denial of Agent Orange exposure or initial 0% rating may be appropriate

# Sample VBA benefits for 100% rating

- Tax free disability payments - > \$3000/month

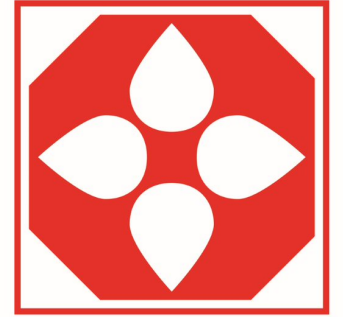
[https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/resources\\_comp01.asp](https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/resources_comp01.asp)

- Spouse gets CHAMPVA insurance coverage
- Survivors' pension (e.g. lifetime payments) - ~\$9000/year
- Children's tuition benefit



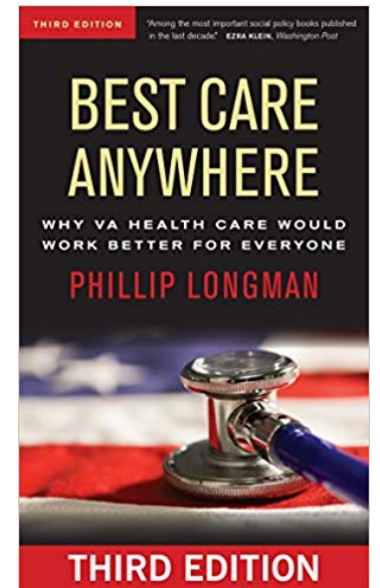
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# Veterans Health Administration



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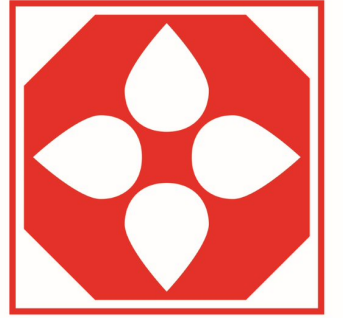
- 170 hospitals and over 1000 clinics serving over 9 million veterans
- Described as “Best Care Anywhere”
- Operates nursing homes (Community Living Centers)
- Contracts for home care, hospice, nursing home care, DME



<https://www.va.gov/health/aboutVHA.asp>

# Eligibility for Health Benefits

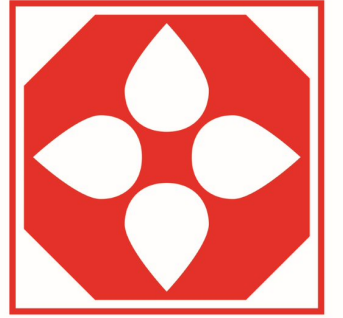
- Must be honorable discharge
  - Enlisted before 9/7/1980
  - If enlisted after 9/7/1980, 24 months active duty
  - Some exceptions exist
- Enhanced eligibility if service connected, poor, or functionally impaired
- Not all veterans are eligible for VA care for CLL
  - Affluence and wellness may limit primary and specialty care access



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# Applying for VHA Care

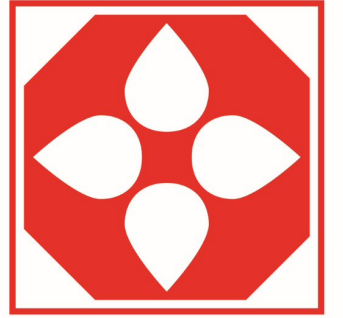


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- On-line at: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/apply/application/introduction>
- By phone at: 877-222-8387
- In person at VA hospital
- Need your discharge paperwork

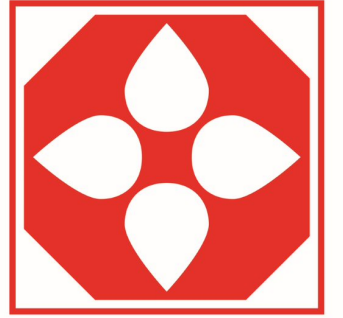
# Care for CLL in VA Medical Centers

- Will need a VA primary care provider first
- Oncology clinics are in VA medical centers
- Mission Act allows for VA to pay for care elsewhere if:
  - Specialty care > 90 minutes away from home of veteran
  - Waiting time for visits too long
  - Non-VA provider enrolled in Mission Act program



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# Co-managed Care

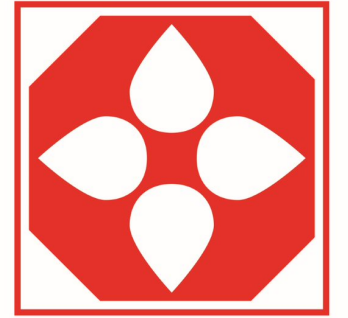


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- Can receive care both inside and outside VA, from different insurers
- VA requires at least annual primary care appointments
- Seeking ongoing oncology care both at the VA and from non-VA providers is discouraged.
- Second opinions from a CLL Center may be appropriate
- May be possible to drop Medicare supplement if using VA care

# CLL Frontline Protocols – Mayo Clinic Recommendations

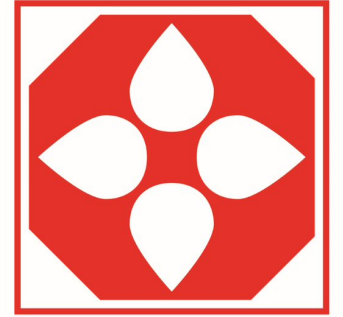
- Ibrutinib
- Venetoclax + obinutuzumab
- Ibrutinib +/- rituximab
- FCR (FLUDARABINE, CYCLOPHOSPHAMIDE, and RITUXIMAB)
- Obinutuzumab



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-As presented by Dr. Parikh Sameer at LRF conference, Sept 2019

# CLL Medications From VA



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- VA health coverage includes medications

Ibrutinib Monograph Addendum

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**Ibrutinib (Imbruvica™)  
National Drug Monograph Addendum  
September 2019**

**VA Pharmacy Benefits Management Services, Medical Advisory Panel, and VISN Pharmacist Executives**

Ibrutinib Criteria

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**Ibrutinib (Imbruvica™)  
Criteria for Use**

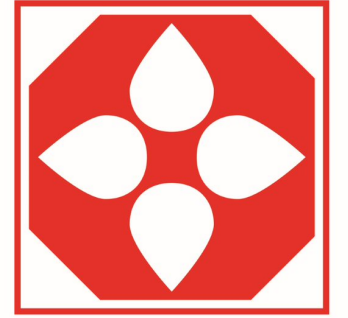
**September 2014, Update September 2018, April 2019, September 2019**

**VA Pharmacy Benefits Management Services, Medical Advisory Panel, and VISN Pharmacist Executives**

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[Ibrutinib Monograph Addendum \(Sept 2019\) - front line CLL/SLL](#)  
[Ibrutinib CFU \(updated Sept 2019\)](#)

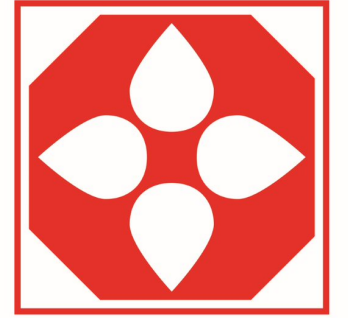
# Summary of VA Coverage



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- Ibrutinib an approved drug for CLL/SLL, if
  - Goals of care and role of palliative care consult discussed
  - Pharmacy approves, using established criteria
  
- Some of the Exclusions:
  - Care not provided by VA or VA purchased care
  - Stroke within past 6 months
  - Clinically significant cardiac disease (e.g. uncontrolled arrhythmia, advanced heart failure, recent MI)
  - Chronic or unresolved infection
  - Low neutrophil or platelet count

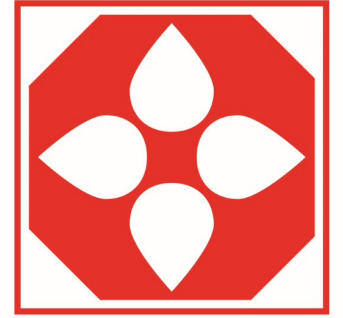
# Cost and Use of Ibrutinib



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- VA cost to purchase ibrutinib is \$7,129/month (@ 420 mg X 30 days)
- No copay when high service connection disability rating
- For others, \$11/month co-pay
- Ibrutinib rates of use vary widely across VA facilities
  - From 7% to 28% of enrolled veterans with CLL receiving ibrutinib

# VA Medical Centers are Teaching Hospitals



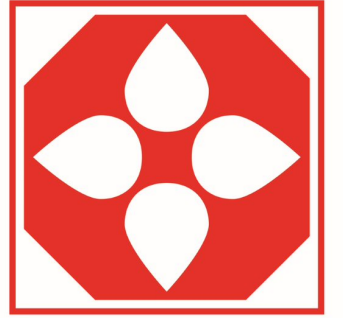
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- VA oncology clinics may include:
  - medical students (in Year 3-4 of graduate school to become a doctor)
  - residents from nearby Universities (doctors training in internal medicine)
  - oncology fellows (internal medicine specialists training for 2 years to sub-specialize in oncology)
  - other types of trainees (e.g. nursing, pharmacist)
- On-site supervision required for all trainees
- Opportunity for patients to teach trainees about CLL
- Patients may ask to see the attending physician (fully trained oncologist)



# What To Do If You Are Dissatisfied with VA Care for your CLL

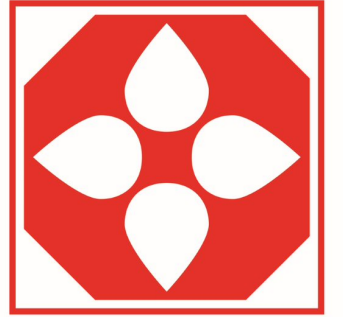
- Talk to your primary provider
- Ask to see a different oncologist at the VA
- Obtain a second opinion from a non-VA CLL expert
- Speak to a Patient Representative/Ombudsman at the VA
- Seek advice from a Veteran Service Officer
- Move care to a different VA Medical Center
- Seek care outside VA using other insurance



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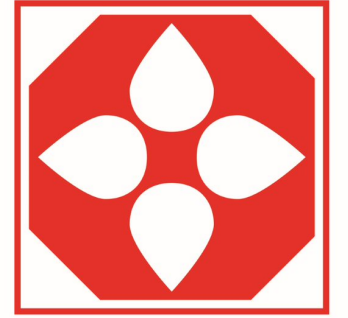
# Other VHA Benefits

- Home Care
  - Post-acute
  - Long-term nursing and personal assistance
  - Homemaking
- Nursing home care (for > 70% S.C. disability rating, or in hospice)
- Travel costs (for Service Connected visits)
- Durable medical equipment
- Hospice
- Caregiver support programs



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# National Cemetery Administration

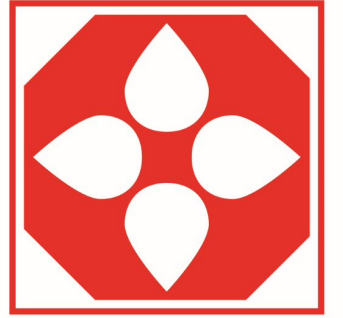


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- Most veterans are eligible for burial benefits
- Plot and headstone or crypt for ashes at one of 138 national cemeteries
- Spouse may be buried in same grave
- Headstone at other cemeteries
- Military funeral honors
- Burial allowance (~\$1500)

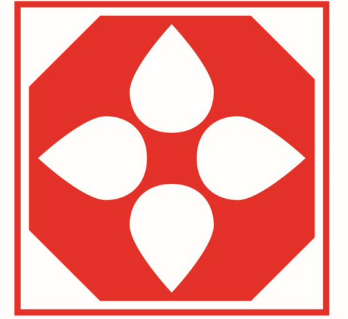
[https://www.cem.va.gov/burial\\_benefits/](https://www.cem.va.gov/burial_benefits/)

# Summary



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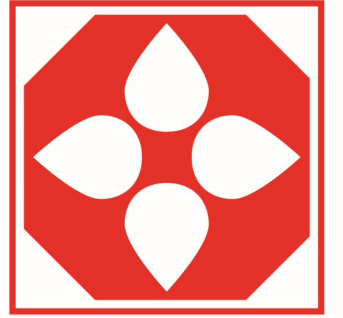
- Veterans get CLL, with some at relatively high risk
- Veterans may have many financial and care benefits
- A pension and free VA care may be available
- To access benefits, help should be sought
- Advocacy to obtain optimal care may be needed
- All veterans with CLL should seek assistance, if possible, from the VA



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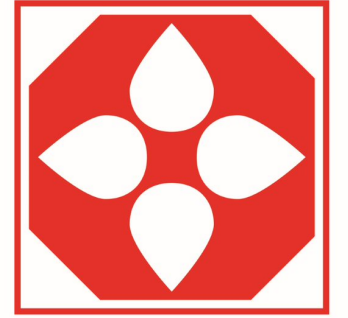
# Questions & Answers

# Resources



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- <https://www.military.com/benefits/veterans-health-care/champva-overview.html>
- <https://nvf.org/champva-civilian-health-and-medical-program/>
- <https://www.va.gov/health-care/family-caregiver-benefits/champva/>



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# Thank You for Attending!

If you have any additional questions, please contact  
[support@cllsociety.org](mailto:support@cllsociety.org)