



The Voice of VA Physicians and Dentists Since 1975

# NEWS

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## Abate Replaces Whitman as Director of Dental Affairs

After serving as NAVAPD's Director of Dental Affairs for a number of years, Deborah Whitman was presented with an exceptional opportunity outside the VA. This required the naming of a new Director of Dental Affairs. While no one can replace Dr. Whitman, NAVAPD is fortunate that she was able to recruit an excellent, qualified and motivated successor.



Deborah Whitman, DMD

Dr. Joseph Abate has agreed to assume the responsibilities of Dr. Whitman's position, and

will have the opportunity to guide NAVAPD's follow-up to the recent Dental Survey, devised by Dr. Whitman. Results of this survey were recently



Joseph Abate, DMD

published in our companion publication, *The NAVAPD Notes*.

The NAVAPD Board of Directors wishes to thank Dr. Whitman for her years of outstanding service to NAVAPD as a member and Board member.

The Board welcomes Dr. Abate, and looks forward to his contributions and leadership. ❖

## The End of the Deep Freeze?

The recently approved "bipartisan" budget opened the door for the first across-the-board pay increase for federal employees in over three years. The increase comes as a cost-of-living increase, beginning with the first full pay period beginning after January 1, 2014.

The modest 1-percent increase was first raised in an August 2013 letter from President Obama to lawmakers. The President indicated that he would use his executive authority to advance the raise in 2014. The increase would take effect automatically unless Congress took action to cancel or modify it.

The approved budget offsets a portion of sequester cuts planned for the next two years. However, future federal employees hired after January 1, 2014 will be required to contribute a

greater amount to their retirement benefits. Their contributions will be set at 4.4 percent of their salaries, well above the 0.8 percent paid by most current federal employees.

Additionally, while the statute will avoid most of the sequester cuts to the Defense Department, cost-of-living adjustments for working age military retirees eventually will be defined at the inflation rate minus one percent, codifying planned loss of buying power each year into the foreseeable future.

While cost-of-living raises have been blocked since 2010, some federal employees managed to continue earning extra pay through promotions, performance awards, and advancing through the steps of their pay grades. Such actions were not precluded by the freeze of 2010. ❖

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# PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2014



**Samuel Spagnolo, MD**

## The President's Corner

**A**s we close the books on 2013 and look ahead to 2014, I want to take a moment to thank you for being a member

of NAVAPD. As the calendar page turns, we will enter our 39<sup>th</sup> year of being the professional organization of record representing the interests of the Veterans Administration's 20,000 physicians and dentists to VA's leadership and before the Congress on major health policy and program issues.

Your support of our organization makes us stronger as we continue with our mission of improving the quality of patient care in the VA healthcare system and strengthening doctor-patient relationships.

In 2013, we continued to work on a variety of issues to administratively support the VA's doctors and dentists.

Our agenda includes working on performance pay issues and continuing medical education, monitoring the Affordable Care Act roll-out, strengthening our relationships with key veterans service organizations, surveying the dental community on their specific needs, as well as

improving our website – we expect to launch a redesigned site in early 2014! NAVAPD has worked on additional internal administrative, financial, and legal issues so we can continue to build on our strong foundation in the coming years.

audiences about issues that matter to our constituents, and how we serve our nation's veterans.

In the coming year, we look forward to working more in collaboration with other organizations interested in

veteran issues and VA health care to develop a policy and research agenda so that we can have a greater impact by proposing workable solutions to policy and process issues which impact the delivery of care to veterans.

Next year brings midterm elections, and we will most certainly be keeping an eye on some important races. We'll also keep track of where all candidates stand on issues related to our nation's armed forces, veterans, healthcare, and scientific research. As always, we're sure the political chatter will get lively ... we plan to stay above the fray and continue to positively address our members' needs and, especially, the care of our nation's veterans and their families.

**A New Year Ahead:  
After 39 Years Of  
Service, NAVAPD  
Maintains a Strong  
Presence in Our  
Nation's Capital**

Looking ahead, we know there will be pay issues we need to continue to address. We are also planning a Spring 2014 conference where we can bring together key Members of Congress and policy makers to speak with NAVAPD members and other important

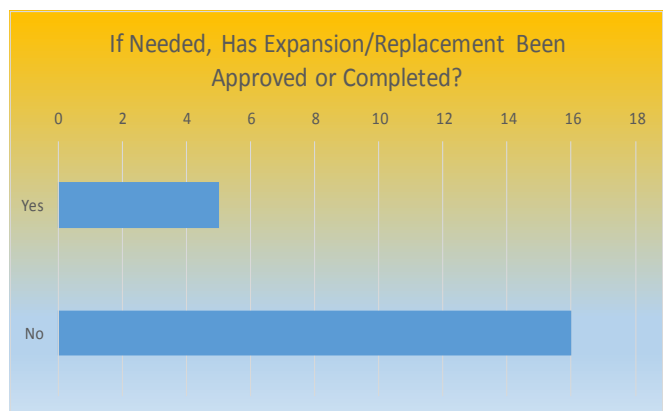
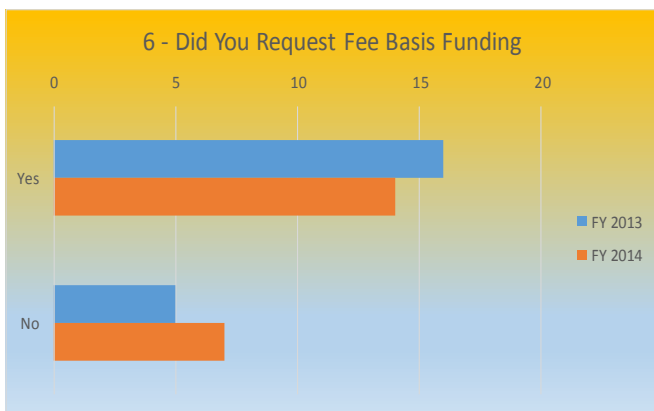
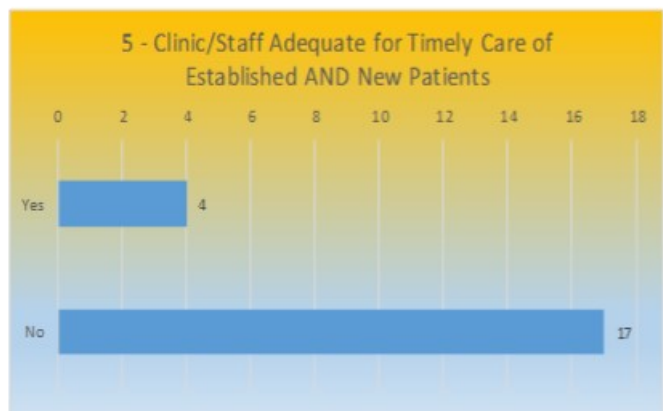
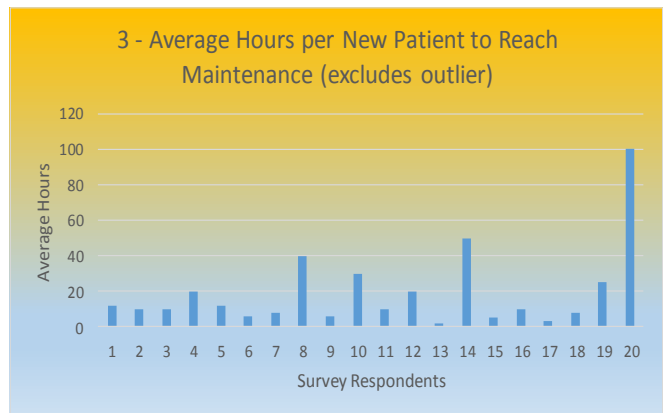
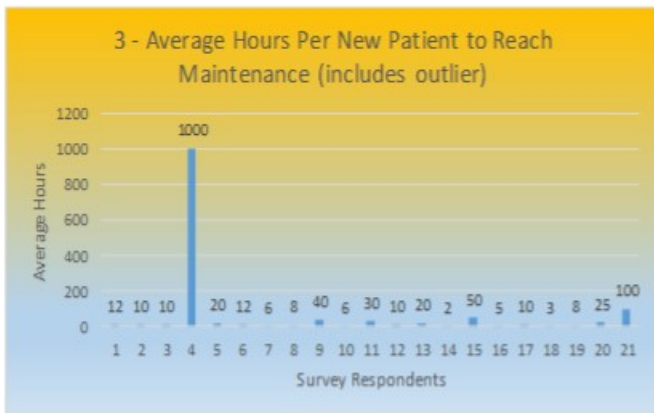
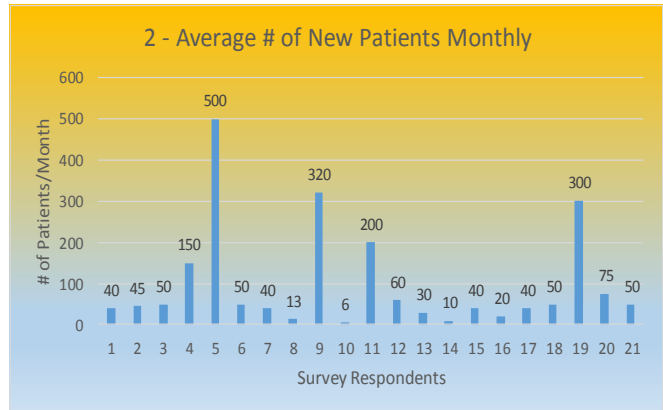
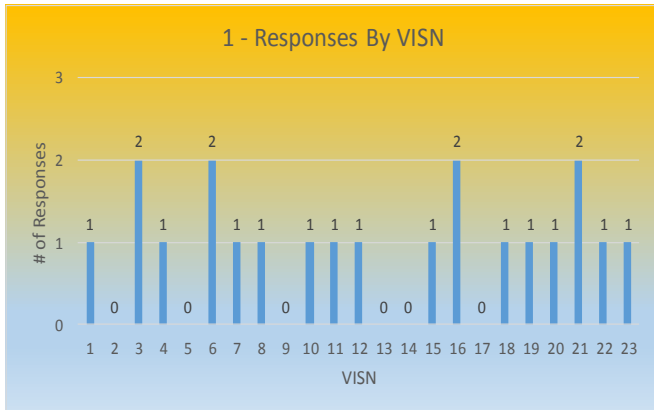
Your NAVAPD leadership looks forward to a productive 2014, and we thank you for your continued support of our organization. Most importantly, we thank you for your continued dedicated service to our Nation's Veterans. ❖

## NAVAPD President Meets with Veterans Service Organizations

**O**n December 2, 2013, following a special invitation, NAVAPD President Dr. Samuel Spagnolo joined a number of Veterans' Service Organizations (VSOs) at the Washington offices of Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) for a roundtable discussion on "Access to Quality Care and Treatment for Military and Veteran Health." A lively discussion ensued, enlivened especially by the candid comments on the topic from Dr. Spagnolo.

A follow-up invitation was quickly received from Thomas Berger, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Veterans Health Council, for NAVAPD to meet with that organization in January, to begin ongoing discussions about the challenges facing Veterans' health care. Weather issues have delayed the meeting until February. Exactly where these discussions will lead is unclear, but this could be a significant step in moving forward in a unified effort to impact the issues that have long plagued the VA and hindered reaching the goal of best possible care for our Veterans. ❖

# Graphic Results from 2013 Dental Survey



## SES Employee Bonuses Must Be No More Than 5 Percent

**A**gencies must cap performance bonuses for career Senior Executive Service and senior-level scientific and technical employees to no more than 5 percent of respective aggregate salaries, top administration officials said in recently issued fiscal 2014 budget guidance. This limit does not apply to political appointees. For non-SES staff, overall bonus amounts are limited to 1 percent of aggregate salaries, according to the memo, posted on the Office of Management and Budget website by OMB Director Sylvia Burwell and then-acting OPM Director Elaine Kaplan.

Because Congress has yet to set final 2014 budget levels, agencies should be “prudent in their awards spending,” the memo adds. The 5 percent threshold does not apply to group awards, referral bonuses or suggestion and invention awards, as those remain frozen at 2010 levels, except for travel savings and foreign language awards.

The instructions echo policies first set in place two years ago for fiscal 2011 and 2012. At the time, administration officials voiced concern that bonuses were “broadly and inconsistently allocated,” and some federal employees had come to expect them as part of their compensation. As the first sequester round was about to take effect this past March, OMB told agencies to issue bonuses only if legally required.

This guidance introduces legal conflicts because by law, SES bonuses may not be less than 5 percent of an employee’s base pay, Burwell and Kaplan said in a footnote to the November 2013 memo (viewable at [www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2014/m-14-02.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2014/m-14-02.pdf)). ❖

### NAVAPD’s Mission and Principles

#### *Mission*

**N**AVAPD is dedicated to the principle that this Nation’s Veterans, as a result of their service to our country’s Armed Forces, have earned an entitlement to quality health care to meet their needs as they become sick or injured. The Department of Veterans Affairs (“VA”) is that agency of government obligated to honor the Nation’s contract with its deserved Veterans.

**NAVAPD** has as its highest priority the preservation and strengthening of the VA Health Care system, so that it stands ever ready to give Veterans quality medical care equal to or better than that which can be obtained elsewhere in our society.

Just as VA doctors care for those who have served, they also stand ready to treat the military and civilian casualties of future conflicts and non-military disasters.

VA Health Care facilities are a principal element in our national security and in our national defense, representing as they do a vast resource to back up the limited capabilities of our military hospitals.

#### *Guiding Principles*

**NAVAPD** shall function as the official professional organization of the VA physicians and dentists at all levels in the VA Health Care system, from the local health care facilities through VISNs to the national level.

**NAVAPD** shall cooperate to the maximum extent possible with official representatives of the VA, to the end that the best possible health care is provided to Veteran beneficiaries.

**NAVAPD** shall endeavor to ensure that qualified physicians and dentists are recruited into the VA Health Care system and retained therein.

**NAVAPD** shall support VA physician research, participate in activities of professional organizations, continuing medical education and participation in equal partnership affiliation with medical schools.

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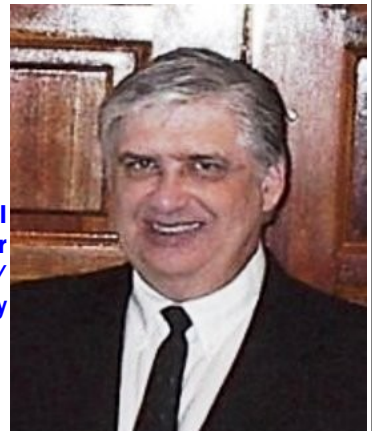


**The Members of the Board  
of NAVAPD Send Their  
Very Best Wishes  
for a Successful and Happy  
New Year**



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## Why I Joined NAVAPD and Other Dentists Should, Too by Joseph Abate

Shortly after I became a staff dentist at the Salem VAMC in 2006, I became aware of NAVAPD. I quickly learned that NAVAPD was the organization that had worked for years to enhance the care of Veterans, and to improve pay for physicians and dentists. I also learned that NAVAPD was solely responsible for the improvements to the physician and dentist pay system to its current design. I knew I needed to join and did so immediately.

I learned through Dr. Whitman that there were several dentists as members and offered to be available as a NAVAPD Ambassador at my facility to promote membership, by explaining the importance of the organization, what it had accomplished for physicians and dentists within the VA, and how its efforts to educate Congress and the VA leadership would help improve the lives of physician and dentists "in the field." Many dentists are not aware that prior to NAVAPD's efforts, we were not allowed to work at other facilities while employed by the VA, and do not appreciate how dramatically this change effected our income opportunities. Many do not know that it was NAVAPD that battled to get Market Pay and Performance Pay for all dentists and physicians

NAVAPD is concerned not only about obtaining equitable pay for physicians and dentists but also seeks to understand the unique challenges and concerns facing dentists and Dentistry in the VA today, explain the reality and impact of these to VA leadership and Congress, and to advocate for improvement of the conditions that Veterans and those who care for them face. NAVAPD is the only organization that focuses only on the needs of dentists and physicians who work in the VA caring for Veterans. In a sense of collaboration, NAVAPD works for all physicians, and those in government service, but ultimately its focus is VA physicians and dentists and our patients. This is what makes it so valuable to all of us. We need unity and a focused voice as we navigate the unique challenges of RME, inadequate staffing models, and inadequate resources.

I am proud to have been asked to be the new Director of Dental Affairs for NAVAPD so that I can be the voice for VA Dentistry and VA Dentists as Congress considers expansion of Veterans' benefits. Please take the time to let us know about the problems and issues that you face. But most importantly, JOIN WITH US to assure that our voice is heard. We have accomplished so much. Together we can accomplish so much more. ❖

## NAVAPD Representatives Volunteer at NBC4 Event in DC



Photo courtesy National Kidney Foundation website

On Sunday, January 12, 2014, NAVAPD President Samuel Spagnolo (seated, right) and Communications Director Larry Conway volunteered in the National Kidney Foundation booth at the NBC4 Health and Fitness Expo at the Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC. ❖

# Happy New Year from the NAVAPD Staff



**Bob Kirshner**  
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**Carol Blymire**  
Consultant



**Larry Conway**  
Director of  
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**National Association of VA Physicians and Dentists**  
**P.O. Box 15418**  
**Arlington, VA 22215**

**Phone: (866) 836-3520**



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**NAVAPD News is a publication of the National Association of Veterans' Affairs Physicians and Dentists. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of NAVAPD.**

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***Pass Along to a Colleague***



**Join NOW!**

**Mail to: NAVAPD, P.O. Box 15418, Arlington, VA 22215**

NAVAPD is the only national organization protecting the interests of VA physicians and dentists. Since 1975, NAVAPD has been your advocate and watchdog in Washington. NAVAPD will continue to focus on opportunities to improve pay and working conditions.

You can join by mail with this form

<b>Full-Time</b> <b>\$160</b>	<b>Half-Time</b> <b>\$100</b>	<b>Retired</b> <b>\$80</b>	<b>Resident Fellow</b> <b>\$45</b>	<b>Lifetime</b> <b>\$1500</b>
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**YES!**

I want to join NAVAPD! **3 ways to pay:**

1. Check (enclose)       2. Payroll Deduction \$6.15/PP       3. PayPal

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