



Vaughan Chapter
February 2021

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the Wheel

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE VAUGHAN CHAPTER PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

COVID-19 Vaccines at Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital

Veterans in one of the categories below are eligible to receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine here at Hines.

They must receive primary care at Hines VA or one of the six Community Based Outpatient Clinics. They can call the Hines VA COVID vaccine call center to schedule an appointment at 708-202-2707 or 708-202-7000. Appointments are currently only at the main Hines Hospital campus. Vaccines are being administered at the Hines auditorium located on the west side of campus. After you schedule an appointment, you will be directed to park on the west side of Building 1. You can enter directly through the auditorium or the atrium entrance. The facility is open 7 days per week

Hines' Current Vaccination Stratification List:

- Veterans 65+ years old
- Dialysis Patients
- Chemotherapy Patients
- Organ transplant Veterans
- Homeless Veteran Program participants
- Inpatient Spinal Cord Center
- Community Living Center
- Residential Care Facility (RCF)
- Hines VA employees

Hines COVID call center and the Community-Based Outpatient Clinics. Veterans need to be



for appointments. Veterans may also call their provider, for scheduling.

As vaccines become available for more veterans, VA care teams will reach out to eligible Veterans to schedule vaccinations. There is no need to preregister or come to a facility to sign up. Visit VA's COVID-19 vaccine public-facing website for more information at www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/. Due to the high volume of calls, please be patient with the

enrolled in health care at Hines or one of its six community-based outpatient clinics to be eligible for the vaccine.

Vaughan Chapter members Dennis Scanlan and Eddy Millar had the vaccine administered with no delays. The process was smooth, and the care they received from staff after they were vaccinated was excellent at the observation waiting area to see if any allergies or reactions occur after receiving the vaccine.



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2021 Bi-Monthly Membershi Meetings

Vaughan Chapter's first Membership Meeting via

Zoom on Wednesday, March 24, noon. For those members that have an email address, a link will be sent to your email, and for those members that do not have email and do not have access to a computer, you can still join the meeting via call by calling this number 312-626-6799; you will be asked for a meeting ID: 553 748 9623 and Passcode: 733870.

Suppose Vaughan Chapter gets the approval of using the Hines VA Hospital, building #128, SCI Multipurpose Room to conduct in-person Membership Meetings, then we should be able to resume on the following dates.

Wednesdays: May 26, July 28, Sep. 22 & Nov. 24.

All meetings are held in the Multipurpose Room at noon, and lunch is provided -FREE. If approval is not granted to meet in the Multipurpose Room, then we will continue the membership meetings via Zoom; please continue to use the same meeting ID and Passcode mentioned above to join the meeting. I highly encourage you to please check your email for updated information from Vaughan Chapter events and meetings.

Executive Director's Report

by Maria Hernandez

Hello, Vaughan Chapter PVA. Members, Associates, and Volunteers

This is the first newsletter of 2021, and we are glad that we are still here and hoping for this year to be a better and healthier year than 2020. Now that we have a new year and a unique opportunity to continue doing what we do, I hope we learned to be more compassionate, caring and to value our family, spouses, friends, neighbors but more than anything, our health and be thankful that we are still here to move forward and become better human beings from now on. Thank you again to all the Doctors, Nurses, First Responders for helping during the Pandemic. We will be forever grateful to all of them. All this being said, let me continue by thanking and acknowledging K-Love 97.9 FM for recognizing five of our Veterans on Veteran's Day by presenting gifts and for running a radio spot on their radio station. Also, thank you for the generosity and kindness from Caring

Patriots and the three participating Jewel Stores for providing groceries to our Vaughan Chapter veterans for the Holidays and to the Oliver-Hoffman Foundation for the donation of the KN95 surgical masks which were given to Vaughan veterans; and lastly to Gun Barrel Coffee Inc in Batavia, IL for the monetary donation to the Vaughan Chapter.

As you probably realize we are still unable to resume our annually events for February and March, Valentine's luncheon, and the Annual Paul Kolb Memorial Dinner.

We hope to resume some of the activities, starting with our first membership meeting via ZOOM on March 24, 2021. (information regarding this is listed on Page One) If things get better, we can resume in-person meetings on May 26, 2021, in the multipurpose room. I encourage you to join us at the Zoom meeting to

learn current information about our upcoming events and meetings.

We have scheduled the following events if time is permitted; Vaughan will be sending updates on each of the following events via email, please check your emails daily so you do not miss any important information.

Poker Tournament
Saturday, May 22

Busse Woods Fishing Derby
Saturday, June 12

Memorial Day Parade,
Saturday, May 29

Annual Chapter Picnic
Saturday, September 11

Veterans Day Dinner
Saturday, November 13

Christmas Luncheon
December 13

All these dates are tentative and subject to change.

Please stay well.

Hope to see you in person soon!



The vaccination – and at Hines it is primarily the Pfizer vaccine that is being administered – have shown remarkably few side effects. Only 2.1% of first dose recipients have had any side effects (and nothing requiring hospitalization) and 4.2% of second dose recipients. This includes both Veterans & employees.

Letter from the Chief

By Michael S.A. Richardson MD FACP
Chief, Spinal Cord Injury/Disorders

Greeting and Happy New Year to all SCI/D Friends & Family

This greeting at the beginning of the year can finally attach a small ray of hope. Although the air outside is the coldest winter temperature for the past 6 years, and the restrictions on hugging, parties, ceremonies, and large gatherings are still in place, there is good news in the air.

The arrival and administration of the COVID-19 vaccine is progressing well at the VHA. Overall Hines has been a leader in administration of vaccines to our most vulnerable Veterans (and some of their caregivers). In all we have administered nearly 15,000 doses with vaccination clinics running every day including for in-patients. Vaccinations have begun in our CBOCs and Home-Based Care Community. Additionally, we have successfully included Veterans with SCI/D as a high-risk population and so they are being scheduled and vaccinated in the #2 high priority group.

The vaccination – and at Hines it is primarily the Pfizer vaccine that is being administered – have shown remarkably few side effects. Only 2.1% of first dose recipients have had any side effects (and nothing requiring hospitalization) and 4.2% of second dose recipients. This includes both Veterans & employees.

The vaccine isn't 100% effective in preventing infection. But again, good news is that it is 94-95% effective and it seems to remain effective even

against the new British mutations. We don't know yet how long the protection will last – will we have to get repeat vaccinations as we do with influenza virus? Will we be forever protected as we are with measles & mumps? Can a vaccinated person still unknowingly spread the infection without themselves showing signs of infection? Can young children be vaccinated and be protected? Many of these questions will be answered in the coming months, but in the meantime protection, safety, decreasing infection rates are all pointing to light at the end of this long miserable tunnel.

The second important piece of news to report is the onset of several new programs in the SCI/D Service.

First, the start of a dedicated SCI/D Pain Clinic in order to expand our treatment options for Veterans with chronic unrelenting pain that has not responded to usual (and often high) doses of opiate medications. The opioid 'epidemic' has brought increased general awareness of the dangers of this category of pain control along with heightened restrictions on the ability to prescribe. Chronic pain is the reported at some time in >70% of SCI/D injured; often very unsuccessfully relieved. The new SCI pain clinic incorporates a structured, holistic, comprehensive approach to pain control and includes biofeedback, acupuncture, mindfulness techniques as well as

medications and coping strategies. Ask your provider if you are suitable for referral to the new pain clinic.

Second, the development of a outpatient strengthening and exercise program with our Kinesiotherapists. This eight-week group program using weights, routines, and stretches aims to increase well being and resilience through self-directed learning & exercises. Until we have a new larger exercise area on campus, we will meet the need for ongoing routine outpatient activities with this structured therapy-conducted program for referred Veterans. Again, ask your provider if you are suitable for referral to this new KT Program.

In the coming months as the weather improves and the infections decrease, I hope to see more activity in and around the campus. From now the "normal" will be more self-reliance and less passive acceptance: Video connect, smartphones, and Bluetooth technologies are the office visits of our future. Being fully healthy in mind body and spirit for our optimal functional ability is the vision.

Thank you for continuing to choose us to provide your care.



President's Report

By Josue Cordova, Vaughan Chapter President

Greetings, Vaughan Chapter members, family members, volunteers, and associates. As we hopefully anticipate the coming of Spring 2021, I am excited about the possibilities and opportunities we have planned for our Vaughan chapter paralyzed veterans of America. Of course, we are praying for approval from the CDC to see our plans come to fruition.

Since March of last year, this COVID-19 pandemic has affected the world and each one of our members' everyday lives, having to be placed in isolation to try our best to avoid this pandemic. Gratefully, world science experts have established COVID-19 -19 vaccinations provided to all members at the VA. Family members can receive them in their community medical centers as well. Hopefully, this will allow us all to get back to the things we enjoy in our daily lives, mainly the functions and opportunities we have been prohibited from

doing nationally and in our Vaughan Chapter. Sanctions are still in effect until at least June, but we're hoping by late Spring, early Summer, we will be allowed to participate in our chapter functions and events. Please take the time to read every article in this newsletter, which will give you information and updates about our chapter events or sports outings and events. MOST especially details about COVID-19 vaccination availability for members at our VA hospitals clinics and spokes. This year we will be having our chapter elections, so please keep an eye out for emails being sent to you in the coming weeks. If you would like to run for a position such as Chapter Board Member or any of the Chapter Officers positions, please contact the office for submission details.



Also, please keep an eye out for emails coming from our chapter office regarding possibilities of video meetings through Zoom so that even though we're not able to physically come together as a Chapter, we CAN do it through video over computers, laptops, phones, and iPads. I want to encourage every one of our members to please participate online and in our chapter and national functions and activities that we have available to you our members. They are great opportunities

for you to join with other members across the country to be done via your computer and in the comfort of your own home.

With everything going on in the world, Vaughan Chapter Board of Directors, Officers, and I want you - our Vaughan chapter members, family, caregivers, and volunteers -to know we are HERE for all of you. You are our number one priority, and you are not alone. Even though we are still isolated in our own homes, VPVA is just a phone call or email away.

Thank you, and God bless.

Josue E. Cordova, President
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Vaughan Chapter



THANK YOU, To Gun Barrel Coffee

for a second consecutive year generous donation towards our sports and recreation program for 2021. On behalf of Vaughan Chapter PVA Members, an appreciation plaque was presented to them for their support by Josue Cordova, Chapter President, and Alberto Velasco, Sports Director.





Veterans Career Program

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We Will:

- Provide one-on-one guidance to help you find meaningful career, education and volunteer opportunities.
- Assess your current abilities, training, and experience and help you identify career goals.
- Guide you through development and enhancement of your resume and cover letter.
- Teach you how to build an effective LinkedIn profile page.
- Practice mock interviews to hone your skills before you interact with employers.
- Regularly communicate with you to track progress and identify other resources to assist in the job search process.
- Be a Partner for Life to assist you for the duration of your career.

Sports & Recreation

by Albert Velasco, Sports Director

As we are planning for 2021 sports events, here is an update of where we are and what to expect this year. With Boccia Tournament, we discuss hosting the Boccia tourney in 2022, so please check the Vaughan Chapter PVA schedule on the website; we will be updating as soon as we have changed.

Bowling Tournament I met with our Vaughan Chapter bowling committee; we have decided to post-pone the bowling tournament to May of 2022 due to the current COVID situation. We currently have numerous of our members in in-patient quarantine due to COVID, so we have forecasted low participation for this event. But we are going to attempt and host an Up-Down Fundraiser in August of this year.

Trapshoot We will be meeting with Mr. Arvino, the Adaptive Sports Program Manager, to discuss the Trap shoot tourney. Please check the Vaughan Chapter PVA schedule on the website; we will be updating as soon as we have changed.

Bass Tournament We have met with our Bass committee, and we are looking at a new venue named the Pyramid Acres Marina in Marion, IL for the Tourney; we are shooting to possibly host it there late this year. Please check the Vaughan Chapter PVA schedule on the website; we will be updating as soon as we have changed.



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We provide wheelchair accessible transportation for people with mobility devices, those that ambulate but need assistance, and individuals with cognitive challenges that require special attention. Clients are welcome to use our service for any reason, including medical appointments, therapy, discharges, and approved small family gatherings. We either invoice an organization, or the passenger/family pays out-of-pocket.

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VETANK (Vet - Tank) is a program that provides a network of all-terrain chairs available to borrow for free by qualified veterans enabling independent participation in outdoor and adventure recreation.

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- Must have honorably served or be serving in the US Armed forces
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FREE TAX RETURN preparation for Veterans, military members and their families.

Earlier this week, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) started accepting electronically filed tax returns as well as paper returns. The IRS reminds taxpayers that filing electronically is the most accurate and safest way to file a tax return, as well as the fastest way to get a refund.

The following links to free tax preparation services will ensure current and former members of the military and their families have access to free tax preparation and electronic filing services to keep more of their hard earned money.

IRS' [Volunteer Income Tax Assistance \(VITA\)](#) and [Tax Counseling for the Elderly \(TCE\)](#) programs are available to taxpayers that earned less than \$53,000 in 2014. Over 3.5 million tax returns were prepared using these services in 2014. All tax returns completed through these programs are prepared by IRS certified volunteers so you can feel confident your tax return is accurate. There are over 12,000 locations where you can utilize these services. To find the closest location near you, simply enter your zip code into the easy-to-use [VITA/TCE Locator](#).

[MyFreeTaxes](#), operating the only free online tax preparation and filing assistance platform available in all 50 states and Washington D.C., allows qualified Veterans, active-duty military, their families and all other qualifying taxpayers who earned \$60,000 or less in 2014 to file both a federal and state tax return no matter where they live. In addition to e-filing, MyFreeTaxes also provides in-person help to individuals and families earning \$60,000 or less in 2014. For more information, please visit: www.myfreetaxes.com. The MyFreeTaxes initiative is delivered in partnership by three nationally recognized nonprofits – Goodwill Industries International, National Disability Institute and United Way – and is sponsored by the Wal-Mart Foundation.

In addition to free tax preparation and assistance services like VITA, TCE and MyFreeTaxes, there are several other options qualifying Veterans and military families can utilize free of charge. However, please make note of additional eligibility requirements and be advised not all are available in your particular location. Check

each for more information on eligibility and availability of services.

[IRS.gov/FreeFile](#) is the one place where taxpayers can choose from a variety of industry-leading tax software options in order to prepare and e-file their federal tax returns at absolutely no cost. If you earned \$60,000 or less last year, you are eligible to choose from among 14 software products. If you earned more, you are still eligible for [Free File Fillable Forms](#), the electronic version of IRS paper forms. More than 70 percent of all taxpayers – 100 million people – are eligible for the software products. Each of the 14 companies has its own special offers, generally based on age, income or state residency. Taxpayers can review each company offer or they can use a “Help Me” tool that will find the software for which they are eligible. Free File offers easy-to-use products that ask questions and you supply the answers. The software will find the right forms, find the right tax credits and deductions and even do the math for you.

[TurboTax Freedom Edition](#) is available to taxpayers with income of \$31,000 or less, or

Eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

[TaxAct](#) is another IRS Free File option. To qualify for free tax preparation, printing, & e-filing, your adjusted gross income must be \$52,000 or less, and you must be between the ages of 18 through 58 years old.

[H&R Block's Free File](#) offers free online assistance if you earned \$58,000 or less, and if you were 53 years old or younger as of December 31, 2014.

[Online Taxes \(OLT\)](#) offers free tax preparation if your Adjusted Gross Income is between \$13,000 and \$60,000 in 2014.

The following free online software companies are available exclusively to members of the military:

[TurboTax Military Edition](#) created a software program specifically for service members. There is currently a free version for junior enlisted and a discount version for senior enlisted and officers.

[Military OneSource](#) is once again offering a no-cost, electronic tax filing service. If you are eligible under the Military OneSource program, you can complete, save, and file your 2014 federal and up to three state returns online at no cost.

[TaxSlayer Military](#) is available to all active duty military. You can prepare both your federal and state return for free with TaxSlayer Military Edition.



This is a shout out to the Vaughan Chapter membership. I hope this year's holiday season was a safe and happy time for you and your loved ones. I also raise my voice to say thanks to the medical professionals, the caregivers and our volunteers all the heroes who are part of the solution. Note this going forward there is no such thing as a rugged individualist we need help to get here, to stay here, and to grow. We should all shout out a big thank you and God bless you to our heroes.

My wish for you the Members of the Vaughan Chapter PVA is a happy and successful 2021 and opportunities to volunteer as part of the solution.

All the way with VPVA

Gerald L Brown, Treasurer VPVA



Want To Improve Your Bowel Function?



Recently published research reveals between 50 and 80% of participants reported improvements in bowel function and/or management after walking in an exoskeleton*

Did you know Paralyzed US Veterans May be Eligible for a ReWalk Personal Exoskeleton?

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*Chun A, et al. Changes in bowel function following exoskeletal-assisted walking in persons with spinal cord injury: an observational pilot study. Spinal Cord. 2020;58(4):459-469.

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Service Officer's Report

*Submitted by Mr. Winston Woodard III
Senior Veterans Health & Benefits Specialist PVA*

Autonomic Dysreflexia:

Managing and Awareness of the Life-Threatening Condition

Many SCI/D veterans have more than one health problem. In fact, more than half of all adults 65 and older have three or more ongoing health problems. Heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, and high blood pressure are some examples of common health problems older adults experience. This article will review the deadliest spinal cord injury-associated complication.

Autonomic dysreflexia (AD) is an acute, life-threatening syndrome of uncontrolled sympathetic discharge that occurs in patients with spinal cord injury at T6 or higher. Autonomic dysreflexia is caused by a damaging event below the level of injury, such as bowel impaction, bladder distension, or pressure sores. This results in dysfunction of the autonomic nervous system, which then prevents proper communication between the body and brain above the injury level. The autonomic nervous system is somewhat self-regulating in that it's at work without your conscious awareness. During autonomic dysreflexia, bodily functions, such as breathing, blood pressure, and heart rate become unregulated. It's important to note that not everyone suffers from this complication.

The avoidance of life-threatening condition is achieved through early recognition and immediate treatment. The principal step in the management of AD is to recognize the constellation of symptoms that define the syndrome. Here are some of the symptoms, but not limited:

- High blood pressure
- Severe pounding headache
- Seeing spots in front of eyes
- Slow heart rate
- Goose bumps above level of SCI
- Sweating above level of SCI
- Nasal stuffiness
- Flushing of skin above level of SCI
- Stomach ulcers
- Pressure on testicles or penis

This disorder can occur shortly after the SCI or years later, so long-term preventive health, including consistent, routine bowel and bladder care program, is essential. It's important the individual can identify and address the stimuli that may be causing the symptoms. The importance of recognizing AD is to prevent potentially catastrophic consequences of this life-threatening syndrome. Medical complications that could arise are the following, but not limited:

- Stroke
- Seizures
- Loss of consciousness
- Acute heart failure
- Heart arrhythmias
- Retinal bleeding
- Death

Self-check and recognition is a key factor and you should always seek medical attention. If you have severe autonomic dysreflexia, your doctor may administer drugs that could help regulate heart rate and relax your blood vessels.

The National Service Office can provide handouts and may have a wallet card to reference to identify signs and symptoms of AD. You can always discuss this with your medical provider during the annual examination at the SCI Center. If you have concerns about AD and want more information, contact your medical provider for additional information.

If you are experiencing any trouble with VA, please contact the National Service Officers.

Questions about PENDING claims and benefits
Robert Statam 312-980-4278 RobertS@pva.org

Questions about Benefits, Access to Healthcare
Winston Woodard 708-202-5623 WinstonW@pva.org

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**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

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What is Indego?

A robotic device that enables veterans to walk again.

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Watch Marine Veteran Steve Holbert's story at www.indego.com/veterans



HANDS: Hypoxia Administration for Neurologic Disability in Spinal Cord Injury

Our research study is looking to evaluate the effectiveness of a one-month intervention. This intervention has several components. I will start by giving you a brief overview, but will describe each of these processes more in detail. Please feel free to respond with any questions you might have.

If you qualify for participation in this study you will be randomly assigned to one of multiple groups that will be a combination of either Acute Intermittent Hypoxia (sessions involving cycles of lower periods of oxygen, interspersed with normal room air) or Sham-Acute Intermittent Hypoxia with training or no training. Training consists of activities related to grip, pinch, and fine motor activities with either Occupational Therapy materials or the use of the Rapael Glove.

I am going to take a bit of time describing some specific details of each of the parts of the study.

In order to participate, you will need to meet our initial criteria (these will be reviewed in further depth later on). If you meet all of the criteria we will ask you to come in for a screening visit. During this session, we will ask you to come to the Hines VA in Hines, IL. We will go over our informed consent, complete a questionnaire related to your past medical history and information related to your spinal cord injury, complete a strength assessment of your upper and lower body, complete sensory testing, ask you to achieve different types of positions with your hands, and measure whether or not you have changes in elbow strength after a single 30-45 minute session of breathing lower levels of oxygen. In order to participate, you would need to show at least a 10% change in strength. We anticipate this session will take approximately 5 hours.

The session of Acute Intermittent Hypoxia (sessions involving cycles of lower periods of oxygen interspersed with cycles of normal room air), requires you to wear a mask. This mask will let you breathe through a valve that will be connected to a hose. The air through the hose will either have normal room air or a lower concentration of oxygen. The lower concentration of oxygen is similar to what you would find at higher elevations, where you still would not need to use supplemental oxygen (Mt. Kilimanjaro). You will not know which concentration you will be receiving. We will monitor your heart rate and oxygen levels throughout the session. We will take blood pressure before and after the session. We will ask you throughout the session if you feel any signs of discomfort, lightheadedness, dizziness, reduced vision, shortness of breath, or euphoria. As noted above, both the normal oxygen and lower cycles of oxygen are structured identically.

If you are successfully enrolled in the study, we will ask you to participate in a baseline testing session. This session will last approximately three and a half hours. This session will consist of: strength testing, sensation testing, functional activities related to picking up and manipulating different objects, spasticity examination in your arms, tests to evaluate memory and attention, and a series of questionnaires. These questionnaires will examine topics related to mood state (depression), independence, frequency and intensity of spasms or spasticity, satisfaction and ability to participate in social roles and activities, upper

extremity function, and fatigue.

Aside from being randomly assigned into the Acute Intermittent Hypoxia or normal room air group, you will also be randomly assigned to a training or no training group.

Specifically, these groups are described as a Massed Practice Intervention, the Rapael Smart Glove, or a no training group. Both the Massed Practice Intervention and the Rapael Smart Glove will focus on activities related to grip, pinch and fine motor control. Each of these intervention sessions will last approximately 2 hours, but may need additional time for set up. You will be asked to participate in 14 sessions over the course of a month. These will consist of 5 visits during the first week, and then three visits per week for the next 3 weeks. If you miss any session, we will try to reschedule.

After the training sessions are completed we will ask you to come back for five follow up visits. These will take place at one week, two weeks, four weeks, eight weeks and twelve weeks after the intervention is completed. During those follow up visits, we will complete the tests noted above. The first and last follow up visits will be the longest and will consist of all of the above mentioned tests. The other visits will be an abbreviated version, and will not consist of questionnaires and tests for memory and attention.

For these sessions, we will ask you to come to the Hines VA.

We will compensate you for your participation.

- \$50 for each screening visit (anticipated to last up to 5 hours).
- \$40 for baseline testing, and each follow up testing session. These sessions are anticipated to last up to 4 hours.
- \$40 for both the intervention visit involving AIH or Sham AIH session alone (total anticipated time about 1 hour), and \$40 for each session involving AIH + training or Sham AIH + training (total time approximately 3 hours).
- Participants will be compensated an additional \$10/hour for each additional hour, if it is surpassed.

There are some additional questions I will need to ask over the phone to see if you meet our initial inclusion/exclusion criteria, if you are still interested after the above information. For example, I will confirm your name and date of birth and ask you questions about your injury and related medical history.

Would you be interested in proceeding to the next step, where I ask some additional questions to see if you meet the initial criteria?

If so, I can be reached at 864-414-8346, or at dfox@sralab.org. If not, thank you for your time, and feel free to reach out at any point in the future if you do become interested.



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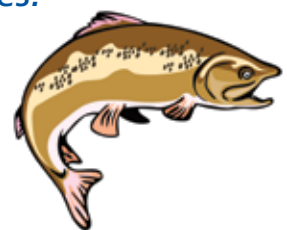
800-727-2234

COVID-19 SAFETY TIPS

- Stay home except to get medical care or essential services
- Separate yourself from other people and pets (except caregivers and service animals)
- Get rest and stay hydrated
- Soap and water are the best options for cleaning hands. Use hand sanitizer if no soap and water
- Have your caregiver wear a facemask while providing care
- Clean all "high-touch" surfaces everyday



We are all looking forward to resuming VPVA recreational activities.



See a List of Virtual Events & more info at vaughanpva.org