



# Advocacy Bulletin

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## Count Down to the 30th National Veterans Wheelchair Games !

Denver, Colorado - The National Veterans Wheelchair Games are upon us and the Mountain States Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America eagerly welcomes the veteran athletes to Denver. After two years of planning with the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System for this inspiring event, we are ready to provide the veteran athletes a great week of camaraderie, courage, and competition.

“Honoring those who have given so much to this Nation is appropriate on the day we celebrate America’s independence,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “The National Veterans Wheelchair Games exemplify America’s commitment to its disabled Veterans and the continuing heroism of these men and women.”

The Games provide an annual multi-event sports rehabilitation program that is open to veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, amputations or certain neurological problems and who receive care at any VA medical facility. Athletes attending can be first-time wheelchair athletes or experienced Paralympians. Six of this year’s participants have previously competed at the world-class Paralympic level.

At the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, veterans compete in 17 different sports, including air guns, archery, basketball, bowling, field events, handcycling, nine-ball, a motorized wheelchair relay, power soccer, quad rugby, softball, swimming, table tennis, track, trapshooting, weightlifting and wheelchair slalom. This year, an exhibition event will also be held in kayaking at Cherry Creek State Park.

The 30th National Veterans Wheelchair Games begin on Sunday, July 4, with a quad rugby demonstration in Civic Center Park in downtown Denver. Kids Day takes place Thursday, July 8, at City Park, where local children with disabilities will meet the athletes and learn about wheelchair sports. Other events will be held at Brunswick Zone, Invesco Field at Mile High Stadium, Family Shooting Center, the Colorado Convention Center and other area venues. Admission is free to the public and local attendance is encouraged.

This year, Colorado is expecting its largest team yet with 48 athletes to compete. We hope to see you there for this great event and to support our the athletes from the Mountain States Chapter!



A special Thank You  
to all of the  
**Colorado VSO  
Coalition Members**  
that sponsored the  
**2010 National  
Veterans  
Wheelchair Games:**

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Squadron 21,  
Golden, CO

## Changes to How We May Treat MS in the Future

There have been two significant announcements recently in how Multiple Sclerosis may be treated in the future. A study out of Stanford University identified that two types of MS may respond differently to a common drug, beta-interferon, allowing for individuals with MS to ensure they are utilizing the most effective drugs to treat their MS. Secondly, the FDA Advisory Committee recently recommended the approval of the first oral disease-modifying therapy to treat MS.

### Recent Study on MS Treatment

MS comes in two varieties, progressive and relapsing remitting. However, the Stanford study has found another distinction in MS that further separates the disease into two more types which may impact how the disease is treated in the future. MS is commonly treated with a bioengineered drug called beta-interferon. The study, conducted by Lawrence Steinman, MD, a George A. Zimmerman Professor of neurology and Neurological Sciences at Stanford University, found that the two different types of MS respond very differently to the drug.

Beta-interferon has shown to only be effective in about half of those individuals who take it and most endure significant flu-like symptoms the first few months on the drug. As a result, knowing what type of MS an individual has may allow that individual to avoid the testing process to see if beta-interferon is effective. This also allows an individual to avoid the side effects that go along with the drug, if they do not have the type that responds well to the drug.

MS is triggered when T cells, part of the immune system, attack

the myelin sheathing on a nerve cell. Immune cells use various chemicals called cytokine to transmit information, responding differently to the different types of cytokine.

The study found that gamma-interferon and IL-17, different types of cytokine, both induce the inflammation common with MS. However, those with MS from gamma-interferon responded well to beta-interferon, while those with MS caused by IL-17 actually endured a worsening of their condition through the use of beta-interferon.

The medical community hopes that with this finding a simple blood test can be used to determine which type of MS an individual has and beta-interferon will only be provided to those with MS induced by gamma-interferon. This will allow for individuals with MS to avoid the painful side effects and the time lost in determining the effectiveness of beta-interferon if it is not necessary. Additionally, properly treating the different types of MS will save money as beta-interferon is a costly treatment.

While more work needs to be done to confirm and develop the results of this study; it does provide important information in the treatment of the disease and in ultimately searching for the cause and cure of MS.

### FDA Recommendations

On June 10, 2010, the Food and Drug Administration's advisory committee recommended the approval of fingolimod capsules for the treatment of relapsing MS. This would be the first oral treatment available to individuals with MS. Though the FDA is not required to take the recommendation of its advisory committees in its final decision on



marketing a drug, it usually does. It is expected that the FDA will make its final decision by September 2010.

Currently, individuals with MS utilize different drug therapies through injection or infusion ranging from once a week to numerous times a week depending on the drug and the severity of the disease's impact on the individual. Fingolimod is a new class of drugs that is not only oral but appears to induce immune cells to remain in lymph nodes, preventing them from migrating to the brain or spinal cord where they can cause the most harm. Clinical trials of fingolimod have significantly reduced MS relapse rates and has been shown to potentially slow the progression of disability.

Both the recent study and the FDA's panel approval of fingolimod creates options for individuals with MS to not only have more effective treatments, but to utilize these treatments through more convenient means. Continued research in these areas are essential in further understanding the disease as we search for a cure.

## Colorado General Assembly Adjourns by Helping Veterans But More Work to be Done

Denver, Colorado—The Colorado General Assembly completed a busy 2010 session on May 12<sup>th</sup> this year and passed several pieces of legislation that provided benefits to Colorado veterans. MSCPVA applauds the passage of the following pieces of legislation:

HB 1019 - authorizes greater authority to police to enforce violations of disabled parking, specifically allowing them to confiscate permits when used illegally and tow vehicles.

HB 1104 - authorizes the creation of special courts to handle the criminal proceedings for crimes involving veterans and active duty military. It ensures special circumstances associated with veterans are understood by the court and taken into consideration.

HB 1140 - authorizes the transfer of funds from the Veterans Trust Fund to the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to construct National Guard armories. This legislation provides some protection for the Veterans Trust Fund principle for the future and still allow for the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs to provide grants to veteran service organizations.

While MSCPVA is pleased with the General Assembly's efforts in these bills we are still concerned that funding from the Department of Veterans Affairs is being used at the Trinidad Nursing Home. MSCPVA appreciates and supports efforts to keep a nursing home to serve Trinidad and the surrounding area. However, the funds it uses to operate are intended specifically for veteran use. As a result,



we hope the General Assembly will address this issue in the next session to ensure that the nursing home needs in the Trinidad area are met in a manner that does not utilize Federal funds marked for veterans.

## VA Makes Changes in Paperwork and Co-Pays

Washington, D.C.—The Department of Veteran Affairs recently announced changes to the amount of paperwork required of veterans to file claims and to co-pays for prescription drugs. MSCPVA applauds the VA's efforts to reduce the claims backlog and simplifying the claims process as much as possible for veterans. However, regarding the changes to co-pays for prescriptions, it is vital that the economic downturn's impact on veterans is considered along with the increased costs of prescription drugs.

With continued reports of significant growth in the VA claims backlog, the VA Secretary, Eric Shinseki, has committed to making a substantial reduction in 2010. Part of this process

included simplifying the forms for claims from 23 pages to 10. With the inclusion of all necessary information and evidence, the VA will still be able to accurately process all VA claims. In addition to simplifying the claims process for VA employees, the new form will also alleviate some of the extensive frustration felt by veterans.

Changes to co-pays for prescription drugs increased the cost by \$1 to \$9 for Priority Groups 7 and 8. While PVA appreciates that the VA originally delayed this increase for six months given the downturn in the economy, there is a false assumption that Priority Groups 7 and 8 include veterans with higher incomes.

It is important for the VA to consider both the cost of



prescriptions and the cost to the veteran. While pharmaceuticals inflation is increasing, many veterans are not seeing an increase to their compensations, pensions or other forms of income. As a result, the increase will have a disproportionate impact on the finances of veterans.

### MSCPVA Invites You to Join Us!

We invite you to participate in the following upcoming events and activities.

**July 4th-9th**

**30th National Veterans Wheelchair Games**

Colorado Convention Center  
700 14th Street  
Denver, CO

Every Wednesday, 1-4pm

**MSCPVA**

**Summer Bowling League**

Brunswick Zones  
Aurora, Colorado  
1pm-4pm

July 14th, 6-9pm

**MSCPVA Poker League**

3400 N. Nevada Ave.  
Colorado Springs, CO

August 12-15th

**MSCPVA**

**Bowling Tournament**

King Pin Lanes  
Colorado Springs, CO

August 20-22nd

**MSCPVA**

**Billiards Tournament**

Widefield Corner Pocket  
Billiards  
Fountain, CO

**We're on the web!**

[www.msdpva.org](http://www.msdpva.org)

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The Mountain States Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America is a member of PVA, a Congressionally chartered veterans' service organization specializing in assisting and promoting a full lifestyle for veterans affected by spinal cord injury or disease. The Paralyzed Veterans of America was formed in 1946. MSCPVA is one of 34 chapters, which received its charter in 1955, and has continuously strived to serve its members located in the Rocky Mountain region of Colorado, Montana, Utah and Wyoming.

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