Today, one in ten Americans is an armed forces veteran. Seventy-five percent served during at least one war time period, and more than 3.6 million women and men have served during the time that we have been involved in the Middle East.

Our first President knew that, “The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by our nation.”

The Philadelphia VA Medical Center provides health care to 90,000 veterans living in America’s fifth largest metropolitan area. Our four-fold mission is to honor America’s veterans with world-class health care, advance medical knowledge through research, train health care professionals, and be prepared to serve in the event of a crisis.

We are a tertiary referral center with more than 135 acute care beds, 95 of which are medicine-surgery beds, and total yearly operating budget of more than $380 million. It is an eight-minute walk from the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. Our orthopaedic residents and faculty are honored to serve the Philadelphia VA Medical Center.

Mitchell (Chip) Staska and John Wheeler, our superb Physician Assistants, provide seamless, exemplary, tender care from initial patient referral through appropriate triage, outpatient evaluation, scheduling of appropriate testing and consultations, surgery, and post hospitalization care. After 15 years in private practice and a decade at the PVAMC, Chip continues to provide immediate, timely interaction with referring physicians and outside consultants, coordination of pre-bed evaluations, surgery scheduling, interaction with the primary care providers, liaison with VA referral health centers, and acute and chronic pain management. John has had the daunting task of coordinating all orthopaedic spine care as Dr. Smith integrates into our system.

We have patient office hours on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays allowing us to provide more than 5200 patient visits each year. New patients are scheduled within thirty days of their initial evaluation.

Current grants include:

- **Timed-release of Local Anesthetic from Sol Gels for Post-Op Pain Control**
  - PI: Sheth, Co-PIs: Ducheyne, Cowan, Radin ($655,091)
- **Engineered Multi-Functional Nanofibrous Meniscus Implants**
  - PI: Esterhai, Co-PIs: Mauck, Schaer, Huffman, Burdick ($678,157)
- **Disc Degeneration in the Lumbar Spine of a Small Animal Model**
  - PI: Mauck, Co-PIs: Smith, Elliott, Dodge, Burdick ($739,817)
- **Cartilage Preservation with Stem-Cell Laden Hyaluronic Acid Hydrogels**
  - PI: Steinberg, Co-PIs: Mauck, Fisher, Belkin ($1,100,000)
Many of the veterans for whom we care commute a long distance from central and northeastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Delaware. Many have significant medical comorbidities and difficult psychosocial environments. Many have had multiple operations making reconstructive surgical approaches and wound healing more difficult. Not infrequently they have had a difficult time reintegrating into society after their military service. Providing Philadelphia-level, state of the art, complication free, compassionate care requires extra special diligence. It is a worthy goal to which we are fully committed.