FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

American Holistic Nurses Association (AHNA) Applauds US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for Implementing the Whole Health System of Care (WHS) for Veterans

In response to the opioid crisis, in 2016 the VA began introducing complimentary and integrative methods of patient centered care to address chronic pain through an initiative called the Whole Health System of Care (WHS). The Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) funded 18 sites for a 3-year pilot implementation of WHS.

A recent report was released to describe the implementation, utilization and effectiveness measurements of the WHS at 18 VA hospitals. Positive WHS findings from this preliminary evaluation include:

- Demonstrating that WH service users experience 1) better perceptions of VA care; 2) greater engagement in healthcare, self-management and greater motivation and purpose in life; and 3) improvements in well-being, particularly in managing stress, with smaller improvements in physical health, mental health and pain.
- Larger decreases in opioid doses observed among the Veterans with chronic pain who were Core Whole Health Intensive users (-38%) and who were Comprehensive Core Whole Health and CIH users (-38%) compared to those who did not use WH services. Decreases in opioid dose levels for all Veterans across the evaluation time period occurred, which is consistent with national VA efforts to reduce opioid use.
- Ninety-seven percent of veterans responded that they were interested in WH services. The effects of WH systems on VA employees suggests multiple benefits in the form of greater employee engagement, lower burnout, and increased workforce stability. Notably, Veterans at these sites also reported higher ratings of patient-centered care on items relating to discussing care goals and the difficulties with care with their provider. All 18 sites have had some early success implementing WHS and plan to continue to transform their facilities further with WH approaches. However, it is recognized that further transformational efforts are necessary to achieve a true culture change in the way care is delivered throughout the Veterans Healthcare System.

AHNA President Barry Gallison DNP, MS, APRN-BC, NEA-BC, CPHQ, AHN-BC said, “The WHS places great emphasis on meeting the healthcare and chronic pain needs of our service veterans and the outcomes of utilizing complimentary and integrative approaches to patient centered healthcare is a greatly anticipated report.”

About AHNA

Founded in 1981, the American Holistic Nurses Association (AHNA) adopted as its primary mission, the advancement of holistic healthcare by increasing awareness and promoting education, as well as personal community-building among nurses, other healthcare professionals and the public. This
nonprofit professional nursing specialty organization is the definitive voice for holistic nursing for registered nurses and other holistic healthcare professionals around the world. Holistic nursing focuses on integrating traditional, complementary and alternative treatment opportunities to improve the mind body and spiritual health of the whole person.

AHNA delivers valuable resources, improves educational tools, and offers superior networking opportunities to a vibrant and expanding universe of holistic healthcare professionals. AHNA currently services more than 5,500 members through 152 local chapters/networks in the U.S. and abroad. Holistic nursing is recognized by the American Nurses Association as an official nursing specialty with both a defined scope and standards of practice.

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