

Humanists of the Treasure Coast
www.HUMTC.com
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VA medical centers, hospices and hospitals, have paid religious, theist oriented Chaplains, on staff to visit with patients, while no one is hired to provide recognition or support to non theistic (secular) soldiers from their secular humanist perspective. It's as if someone believes the myth that there are no atheists in foxholes and therefore no atheists in military hospitals, rehab centers or hospices.

Secular Humanist oriented soldiers (atheists, agnostics, non theists) serve in all branches of the military and deserve the same level of recognition and support as is provided to religious soldiers. Religious surveys by Pew Research, indicate that the non religious now represent more than 15% of our population yet their needs are ignored.

Non religious soldiers and veterans have risked their lives and limbs for our country and need our help to fight for them now.

I invite you to join Humanists of the Treasure Coast (HUMTC) in its quest to encourage the Defense Department to provide equally for its non religious soldiers. Deceased HUMTC member and Navy veteran, Phil Heycock, was able to motivate the West Palm Beach VA medical center to recognize secular humanism, which to the best of my knowledge is a first in the nation. You can help to educate our elected officials about the need for legislation and funding to ensure that non religious soldiers receive the same level of support and recognition that is provided to their religious brothers and sisters.



Joe Beck, Founder

Humanists of the Treasure Coast

February 18, 2012

Dear West Palm Beach Medical Center Administrator,

I am Phil Heycock, a secular humanist, Navy Viet Nam era combat veteran, and a resident at the W. Palm Beach VA Hospice. I appreciate the medical, nursing, and social work services that I have received .

The purpose of this letter is to request that you initiate policies that will ensure that non religious veterans receive the same level of recognition and support as is currently provided to religious veterans. Since I am terminally ill, I appreciate your giving this a priority since I do not know how much time I have left.

Currently, religious, theistic oriented Chaplains are on staff and visit patients including secular humanist atheists like myself. While the Chaplains have been friendly, according to their Christian beliefs, I will be burning in hell after my demise. While I respect their right to believe as they wish, I don't find their perspective on death comforting.

Two of my roomates have already passed away and out of respect to them I listened quietly as a Chaplain and medical staff came into my room and prayed over them. I request that you institute a policy that will ensure that when non religious patients die, they will have their memory honored by a secular humanist oriented staff person in a manner similar to how the religious perspective of patients is currently recognized.

In order to meet the needs of the more than 15% of your patients who are not religious, I ask that you provide a secular humanist support representative to visit with non religious patients to provide comfort and conversation from a non theistic, secular humanist perspective.

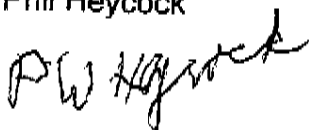
To ensure that patients and family members are aware of the availability of secular support services, I suggest that a statement like the following be included on the VA Medical Center webpage and in material given to patients: "For our non religious patients and family members, supportive services are available from a secular humanist perspective by calling (list a VA extension)".

Until such time as your facility provides this support, Humanists of the Treasure Coast, of which I am a member, is available to the extent possible, to provide supportive services to your secular oriented patients from a secular humanist perspective.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I thank you in advance for instituting policy changes to meet the needs of your humanist, atheist and agnostic patients.

Very Truly Yours,

Phil Heycock





DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Medical Center
7305 North Military Trail
West Palm Beach, FL 33410-6400

APR 12 2012

Humanists of the Treasure Coast
Attn: Mr. Joe Beck

In Reply Refer To:

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Dear Mr. Beck:

Thank you for your letter from March 29, 2012. Veterans Affairs mission is to care for the men and women who have served our nation in military service. We take this mission very seriously. I appreciate your concern and compassion to see the same. We share with you the loss of your friend, Mr. Heycock, and consider it an honor to have cared for him in his last days.

VA prohibits proselytization and does not promote, favor, or prefer any particular religion or faith group, nor does it promote, favor, or prefer religion over non-religion. Chaplains have been given the task to speak to patients and inquire what type of support they desire. If the support of the patient is secular (atheist, agnostic or humanist) in nature, the chaplain will make contact with whomever the patient wants and request a visit for that person to come visit the patient. If the patient does not know of a person in the community, we will make all attempts to contact a person of like mind and request that they visit the patient if the patient consents.

Chaplain Beazley informed me that following is being added in the patient handbook, "For our non-religious patients and family members, support is available from others sources including from a secular humanist perspective. For assistance please contact Chaplain Service at extension 5661." Once this update is completed it will be given to every patient admitted to the medical center.

Should you have further questions or comments please feel free to contact Chaplain Anthony Beazley, Chief of Chaplain Service, at (561) 422-5661.

Thank you for volunteering to be on the list of available organizations willing to respond to Veterans who ask for such assistance.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deepak Mandi".

Deepak Mandi, MD
Acting Medical Center Director