**My Life, My Story: Interviewer Guide**

**Purpose**

Patient narrative or story telling can be an excellent approach to learning who our patients are as unique human beings. Placing a Veteran’s story in the electronic health will help introduce them to the many healthcare workers with whom they will interact and will foster more patient centered care. The stories should be ~1000 words long – enough to capture a Veteran’s story, but not more than any busy healthcare worker would have time to read.

**How to Get the Interview Started**

Many Veterans will tell you their story isn’t important despite assurances that it is.

Introduce the interview with “*We want to get the stories of your life. This is important to us. We want to understand who you are, what you have been through and what is important to you.*”

Remember to let the Veteran talk. This should be a recording of their stories as they want them told. The story should be written in the first person, capturing the Veteran’s voice and style.

Some questions can be helpful in directing the interview, but let the Veteran tell his/her story. The key is to ask open-ended questions about something that is important to the Veteran.

**What Questions to Ask**

Start at the beginning. Don’t worry about names or dates as you can always piece those together later. It’s more important to keep the interview rolling. Remember, this does not need to be done in chronological order. The questions below are a **guide** and the Veteran may tell his or her story in a different order.

Don’t rush. Silence is okay. You might ask a sensitive question that causes the Veteran to feel – and maybe even demonstrate – some strong emotions. Your role is to sit with them and give them time and space to think about what they want to say. Express empathy, such as “that must have been so difficult.”

**Ending the Interview**

After you have asked your questions, be sure to ask the Veteran if there is anything else he or she would like to share. When you’ve finished writing up the interview, offer the Veteran the opportunity to review the story prior to entering it into CPRS. Finally, don’t forget to thank the Veteran for sharing his or her story with you.

**Check to see if your patient already has a story done by looking in the POSTINGS tab (top right corner of CPRS home page). The story can be found there if they have one.**

Identify Susan Nathan, MD as one of the co-signers to your note.

**CPRS Note Title:** MY STORY

**My Life, My Story: Suggested Questions**

1. Discuss Veteran’s childhood. Focus on topics that feel safe to the patient about childhood, upbringing. Some potential questions include:

Where did you grow up-what was it like?

Describe your relationship with your parents and grandparents.  
What do you remember them teaching you?

Was your father or other relatives in armed forces? If yes, how much did he talk about it?

What were you like when you were a kid?  
How many siblings did you have? Where did you fall in order?  
What was your favorite area of study in school?

1. Proceed to later periods in life and significant relationships and events. Some suggested questions include:

What branch of the service were you in? How did you pick that branch? how long did you serve? Where were you stationed? What was your job when you were in the service (MOS)?

What did you do when you came back?

1. Allow the Veteran’s story to evolve from here. Explore major turning points in life and career up to a few years ago and important lessons learned. Bring out the significance of events and people for who the patient is today. Some suggested questions:

How/when did you meet your significant other?  
What’s secret to a long relationship?

How many children do you have? Grandchildren? Great-grandchildren?

What hobbies do you enjoy?

1. Spend time on major life lessons learned, anything noteworthy that the Veteran has not yet revealed but feels is important to his/her life story. Some suggested questions:

What has affected you and your family most?  
What has been the most significant change you see in yourself?  
What is most important to you?

What do you value most in life?

What advice or wisdom would you like to pass on to others?

What do you want your healthcare team to know that they don’t already know?

1. Finish with some deeper questions if these answers were not previously captured:

What are you most grateful for?  
What were your major achievements or what have been your major achievements to date?

What are you proud of?  
What do you hope for your future?

How would you describe your family legacy?

If you were to live your life over again, what would you do differently or change? What would you keep the same?