

# Former VA clinic turning into urgent care facility

**By Rhiannon Meyers**

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TEXAS CITY — A Texas City veterans clinic will soon become a private urgent care facility.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs did not renew a contract with Valor Healthcare, which was operating the Texas City and Galveston veterans clinics.

Instead, the administration decided to open its own clinic in Galveston on March 4 and shutter the clinic at 9300 Emmett F. Lowry Expressway.

Valor Healthcare, which holds the lease on the Texas City clinic, is transforming the clinic into an urgent care clinic, CEO Howie J. Lewin said.

The clinic will be run by a chief physician and three other staff members. It will be open 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. weekdays and from noon to 9 p.m. Saturdays.

The clinic will have the capacity to treat up to 50 patients a day, Lewin said.

"We built a very nice clinic, and we're proud of it," Lewin said. "We're going to utilize that space and provide urgent care for folks that live in and around Texas City."

The veterans' administration announced in January that Valor Healthcare would no longer operate the two Galveston County clinics because of "performance issues," spokeswoman Bobbi Gruner said.

Valor Healthcare came under fire in spring 2008 for poor staff performance, prompting then-U.S. Rep. Nick Lampson to ask for an investigation into the complaints. The administration has completed that investigation, but the results were not immediately available. They can only be obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request, Gruner said.

Lewin said the clinics consistently provided veterans with quality care. Area veterans were pleased with the care they received from the Texas City and Galveston clinics, he said.

All 14 veterans clinics operated by Valor Healthcare nationwide have been accredited, he said.

The VA dropped its contract with Valor not because of "performance issues," but because the Houston-area Michael E. DeBakey Medical Center was trying to eliminate outpatient clinics operated by contractors, Lewin said.

"It was not a result of the quality of care," he said. "I believe the vast majority of veterans receiving health care liked the clinic and liked the way they were treated."

Valor earned an estimated \$9 million while under contract with the VA to provide care for veterans in Texas City and Galveston, Lewin said.

The new private urgent care clinic will treat patients who can pay for services through insurance or with cash, Lewin said.

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#### Clinic Details

ADDRESS: 9300 Emmett F. Lowry Expressway in Texas City

CHIEF PHYSICIAN: Dr. Robin Rothrock

HOURS: 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Friday; noon to 9 p.m. Saturday

SERVICES: Outpatient health care services and non life-threatening acute care services