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# News Release

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### VA BHHCS offers modern care for new Veterans



Returning Veterans take advantage of high-tech medical care through VA Black Hills Health Care System (BHHCS). Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation New Dawn (OIF/OEF/OND) Veterans can now utilize telehealth for follow-up, primary care appointments.

Telehealth offers a digital link between Veterans in one location with a medical provider in another geographic location. This video technology makes it possible for

Veterans to come to one of VA BHHCS's community-based outpatient clinics or VA Medical Centers and connect with their medical provider, who may be in a hospital more than a hundred miles away.

"We wanted to expand and see patients where it's more convenient for them," said David Cohen, OIF/OEF/OND Primary Care Physician Assistant.

Cohen describes telehealth as similar to a Skype video chat, except with much better quality and with the addition of medical equipment capable of performing a comprehensive exam. The telehealth cart has monitors for two-way viewing, peripheral attachments for examining the ears, eyes, nose and throat, and contains a total exam camera extension for taking close-up photos of a patient's skin. In the near future, medical providers will be able to transmit and receive heart and lung sounds clearly with a secure broadband or internet connection and the use of a stethoscope that is already equipped on every cart. A telehealth clinical technician assists with the exam from the Veteran's location.

"I will be able to listen to their heart and lung sounds over the machine," Cohen said. "The technician will hold a stethoscope up to the Veteran and I will hear it. The technician can also hold a small

camera to the Veteran's ear or throat so that I can look inside them. The picture quality is actually clearer than if I were there, looking inside myself."

Cohen says that the telehealth option is especially appealing to his patients, as most of them are of a younger generation and they embrace new technology like this.

"Younger patients are familiar with the idea of this kind of technology," Cohen said. "They love the idea that they can use their time more wisely. With working and school, they can't always take time off for an appointment."

This new option has become a big time saver for some Veterans.

"I have patients in North Dakota, Wyoming, Nebraska and the Pierre area," Cohen said. "Why should my Pierre patient have to drive two hours to the VA Medical Center for a follow up appointment that will take 15 minutes?"

Cohen is the first primary care physician to begin utilizing telehealth for follow up appointments at VA BHHCS. He has received overwhelming positive feedback from his patients and continues to be excited about this new option and how it can help Veterans.

"I have the best job in the VA. I really do," Cohen said.

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