

**VA**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# News Release

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## VA National Artificial Intelligence Institute award winners of AI Tech Sprint

WASHINGTON — Winners of the Department of Veterans Affairs [2020-2021 Artificial Intelligence Tech Sprint](#) are six tech companies that created programs aimed at preventing Veteran suicide and improving their health care using the latest AI technology.

VA's National Artificial Intelligence Institute competition encourages innovators to develop ways to improve services for Veterans.

National AI Tech Sprint award recipients include:

- First place and \$50,000 to [Behavidence](#) for a smartphone application that monitors Veteran activity, categorizes users by similar behavior and flags for follow-up those at increased risk for suicide.
- Second place and \$25,000 to [SoKat Consulting, LLC](#), for creating a chatbot that can integrate with VA's Blue Button medical records access. The chatbot can help Veterans get answers to questions and better understand their health care between visits.
- Third place and \$10,000 to [General Dynamics IT](#) for an algorithm that can classify skin lesions and help medical staff determine if the quality of an image is good enough to make a skin cancer diagnosis.

VA also gave \$5,000 awards to JumpStartCSR for an app that integrates with physical therapy to prevent and treat injuries; HIVE Lab at George Washington University for an app that helps Veterans manage conditions such as diabetes by personalizing treatments based on gut microbiome; and Ouva, LLC for a platform that helps clinicians better monitor vital signs and other health care issues for patients in isolation.

The intent of the sprint is to match the private sector with Veterans, VA clinicians and other experts who mentor the companies to brainstorm solutions and new ideas over a three-month period. VA will further evaluate the best ideas and products to potentially adopt at pilot sites and then roll out nationwide.

Participating teams gave presentations and demonstrations judged by panels of Veterans and other experts. In all, 44 teams from industry and universities participated, addressing a range of health care challenges such as chronic conditions management, cancer screening, rehabilitation, patient experiences and more.

"VA has long been an industry leader in research and innovation, and this sprint competition accelerates discovery," said Artificial Intelligence Tech Sprint Lead Rafael Fricks, Ph.D. "The short timeline and mentoring allow VA to partner with industry leaders without any roadblocks to develop the health care solutions of the future — not just for those giving the care, but those who will benefit from it most."

Instead of the traditional contracting process that might take months or years to bring a product online that may not work as anticipated, this allows companies to tailor their products while VA is involved from the ground up.

The next round of competition will open by the end of 2021. More information can be found at the [Challenge.gov](#).

NAII is a joint initiative of the Office of Research and Development and the Secretary's Center for Strategic Partnerships. For more information, visit the NAII's [Tech Sprint web site](#), or sign up for the [AI@VA Community](#) for the latest announcements.

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