

# North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System

Office of Communication & Outreach



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## **NF/SGVGS Uses Advanced Technology and Educational Outreach to Improve Quality of Care for Veterans with Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes**

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***U.S. Army Veteran Waldence Cohen gets his blood sugar levels checked through a continuous glucose monitor at the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center in Gainesville, Fla.***

U.S. Army Veteran Waldence Cohen was diagnosed with diabetes in 2018. To help better track his blood sugar levels, he recently had a continuous glucose monitor (GCM) placed in his left arm.

“I started coming to the VA for diabetic care a few years ago,” Cohen said. “The doctors here have been good to me and helped me get my numbers under control.”

CGM automatically tracks blood glucose levels (blood sugar) on a 24/7 basis. Tracking blood sugar levels continuously helps patients with type 1 and type 2 diabetes prevent diabetes complications. According to the [CDC](#), these complications include heart attack, stroke, kidney disease and blindness.

“Using advanced diabetes technology, VA faculty members have found fewer low blood sugar levels in Veterans with diabetes,” said Dr. Ghayee, Chief of Endocrinology at the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System (NF/SGVHS). “Both cases of high and low blood sugar can be life-threatening for diabetic patients.”

According to the [National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases \(NIDDK\)](#), CGM works through a tiny sensor inserted under the skin, usually on the arm or abdominal area. The sensor measures the interstitial glucose level, the glucose found between cells. The sensor sends information wirelessly to the patients’ smartphone or tablet. If the CGM is placed with an insulin pump, the data tracked by the CGM can help determine how much insulin to administer.

In addition, “Since 2018, many of our patients have also benefited from the development of an artificial pancreas system,” said Dr. Julio Leey, Director of the Diabetes Clinic at the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center. “This is an insulin infusion pump plus a glucose sensor (CGM) that results in the automatic adjustment of insulin to improve glucose control.”

To increase Veteran access to quality diabetic care, the Office of Rural Health has provided the funding necessary to implement these continuous glucose monitoring programs in VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs).

“The VA has a unique advantage because every clinic is staffed with a pharmacist and a dietician who are both certified diabetes educators,” said Dr. Leey. “We are using advanced technology and educational outreach to improve the quality of care for Veterans both at the specialized clinics and the local level.”

The diabetic clinic at the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center is multifaceted. Its clinicians focus not only on diabetic care but also on its patients’ nutritional needs, physical health, and mental well-being. In the future, the clinic will be taking a closer look at the effects of depression on diabetic care and management.

“Without the VA, I don’t know where I would be medically or financially,” said Cohen after receiving his CGM sensor. “I’m a living testimony that it works.”

Veterans with type 1 or type 2 diabetes should consult their primary care physician or endocrinologist to determine if CGM sensor technology or the artificial pancreas system is right for them.

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*“...to care for him who shall have borne the battle  
and his widow, and his orphan...”*

- President Abraham Lincoln



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