

Department of Pennsylvania
Veterans of Foreign Wars
of the United States

CHARTERED BY CONGRESS

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DIABETES PROGRAM

The 2018-2019 Department of Pennsylvania VFW Diabetes Program is being dedicated in memory of Bill Mankey who passed away from complications of diabetes. Bill once walked the Erie to Pittsburgh Diabetes Walk and was a member of the Post #2754 Color Guard that escorted the walkers across the finish line for many years.

The Erie to Pittsburgh Diabetes Walk has been discontinued, but the District 21 Diabetes Walk continues. I hope every Post, Auxiliary and District will continue to donate to the Diabetes Program.

Remember, everyone knows someone with Diabetes. Twenty five percent (25%) of veterans have Diabetes. Together we have raised over \$2.5 million for Diabetes Research.

I want to thank the Posts, Auxiliaries, and Districts for all your help throughout the years. Together we have raised over \$2.5 million for Diabetes Research.

Please continue supporting the Diabetes Program with your donations. The deadline is November 30, 2018.

Thank God for his guidance and strength.

Bob Mander

Bob Mander

Diabetes Chairman

25 Percent of VA Patients Have Diabetes

VA reports that some veterans developed diabetes as a result of herbicide exposure in Vietnam.

BY KARI WILLIAMS

David DeBolt is one of nearly 25 percent of VA patients who has been diagnosed with diabetes.

A VFW member with the Department of Missouri, DeBolt said he received the diagnosis about five years ago during an annual physical at the Kansas City VA Medical Center. An A1C test determined that his blood sugar was “a little elevated.”

The blood test is mostly used in relation to diabetes and reveals average levels of blood glucose, or blood sugar, over the previous three months, according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

Diabetes is a chronic disease characterized by a person's inability to produce or correctly use insulin, according to VA. Furthermore, it is the leading cause of blindness, end-stage renal disease and amputation for VA patients. As of last August, roughly 1.5 million veterans have been diagnosed with diabetes, according to VA.

Three main types of diabetes exist — Type 1 (the body does not make insulin), Type 2 (the pancreas is unable to generate the proper amount of insulin to maintain normal blood glucose levels) and gestational diabetes (typically develops during pregnancy in non-diabetic women).

The majority of people (95 percent) have Type 2 diabetes, according to VA, and those with Type 1 are not eligible to serve in the military.

Some veterans, according to VA's Office of Research and Development, were diagnosed with diabetes “as a result of being exposed to herbicides while serving in Vietnam.”

Federal law, according to VA, “recognizes a link” between Agent Orange and Type 2 Diabetes.

DeBolt said he was “stupefied” when he learned of his diagnosis.

“Most of my life I have been very slim and trim,” DeBolt said. “I quit smoking a long time ago and discovered that I had an appetite. And I'd eat everything I could get my hands on and ballooned up in weight.”

Diabetes symptoms, according to VA research, include blurry vision, fatigue, hunger and weight loss, among other warning signs.

VA researchers published “Glucose Control and Vascular Complications in Veterans with Type 2 Diabetes” in 2009 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Their study included nearly 1,800 veterans from 20 VA sites, and determined that “tight glucose control can be achieved safely” in most patients.

“However, patients with long-standing diabetes and at high risk for cardiovascular disease (CVD) experienced only a modest benefit in reducing their CVD over a five- to six-year period,” according to an article published in the Spring 2015 issue of *VA Quarterly Update*, produced by VA's Office of Research and Development.

DeBolt, who served in Vietnam from 1968-69 with the 1st Cavalry Division and from 1971-72 as a MACV adviser, manages his diabetes through medication, but he also watches what he eats.

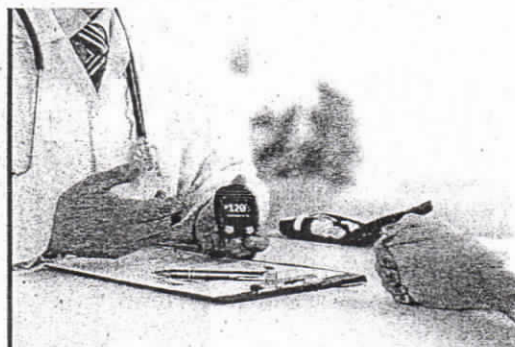
“Sometimes, like at holidays, that's very, very difficult for me,” DeBolt said. “Most of the time both my wife and I try to eat a little healthier, [but I] don't always get it done.”

Overall, DeBolt said the diagnosis has not affected his daily life.

“I guess it's because of Vietnam,” DeBolt said. “I just learn to live life every day.”

VA offers diabetes education and self-management both in person and through telehealth. For more information about diabetes, visit <https://www.research.va.gov/topics/diabetes.cfm>.

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MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS IN DIABETES TREATMENT

1977 Dr. Rosalyn Yalow earned the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for developing a new way to measure insulin and other hormones in the blood.

1998 VA researchers discovered that an implantable insulin pump offers better blood sugar control, weight control and quality of life for adults than multiple daily injections.

2009 VA doctors determined, through the VA Diabetes Trial, that intensively controlling blood sugar reduces the risks of heart disease only modestly.

2013 VA physicians found, in the “VA-Department of Defense Millennium Cohort Study,” that sleep apnea and poor sleep quality predict diabetes, independent of other diabetes risk factors or mental health.

2013 VA began participation in a National Institutes of Health study testing the long-term benefits and risks of four widely used diabetes drugs in combination with metformin, an anti-diabetic medication.

2015 VA scientists learned, in a follow-up to the VA Diabetes Trial, that 10 years after the trial's conclusion, patients who had intensively controlled their blood sugar levels during the trial had no better survival rates than those who did not.

Source: www.va.gov

