

## **My Annual Medical Exam**

I recently had my annual medical exam with the VA clinic here in Green Valley. The Clinic is an extension of the VA hospital in Tucson, about 30 miles away. Green Valley has many former servicemembers and retired military, so there is a need for a VA clinic here. Since the clinic is between doctors, I was asked if I would be willing to participate in a tele-medicine project of the VA's. Being an IT guy and having done hundreds of video conferences, of course, I agreed. It was interesting and an option for providing health care remotely. A week prior to the doctor visit, I had the usual lab work done. I'm happy to report that all the results were in the normal ranges. An on-line application called MyHealthVet had the test results for me to see prior to my doctor visit. Upon arriving at the clinic, I did the on-line check-in with a computer in the lobby and sat down waiting for my name to be called. The nurse led me to an examination room and took my vital signs. I'm happy to report blood pressure, pulse, oxygen level and temperature were all normal. The nurse did point out that I could lose some weight, however! We went through the list of standard questions, alcohol use, medicine use, any feelings of depression, exercise, etc. After we did the routine questions, we went to the tele-medicine room and I met a doctor who was in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The nurse, using a stethoscope attached to the tele-medicine computer did the usual readings on my heart and lungs while the doctor in Green Bay was able to see and hear all of what the nurse was doing. The doctor asked me a bunch of questions, some the same as the nurse did. He reviewed my lab work and agreed with the nurse that all results were in the normal range. He also suggested losing some weight and recommended methods, including swimming. He made a comment that playing the harmonica is a good exercise for the lungs which I thought was rather interesting. He also recommended a couple additional tests which I hope to schedule at the Fargo VA when I returned to Moorhead. I did make a mistake, however, when I told the doctor that I was an IT guy. He then proceeded to give me his life story about his work in IT and tele-medicine., much more information that I needed. At the end of the exam, he put some notations in my medical chart, on-line. When finished, I stopped at the check-out desk and the person there was already working on scheduling my next exam. My next exam is scheduled for late October with a doctor at the Green Valley clinic. Overall, the tele-medicine exam went very well and I recommend it for others. It is a viable option to traveling large distances to a VA hospital. It does require that the doctor be comfortable with tele-medicine. It also shows that the VA is willing to try new service methods, a good thing.