



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AFGE LOCAL 2152 AFL-CIO

PRESS RELEASE

Office of Medical Inspector Report Finds Poor Care of Veterans at the Reno VA Hospital

A scathing 72 page report by the Office of Medical Inspector (OMI) dated April 24, 2012 reviewing the quality of care rendered at the Reno VA found most of the Union's concerns regarding ongoing misappropriation of resources and patient care below community standards to be valid and true. The OMI investigated the Reno VA in October 2011 in response to a detailed 15-page letter to Congressman McClintock in which the Union had outlined multiple patient safety and care concerns of the Reno VA employees. The report, which was only recently made public, found many examples of ongoing gross mismanagement and direct obstruction of care by the Reno VA's leadership and made 56 recommendations, including recommending further investigation of some of the findings. Director Kurt Schlegelmilch's most used motto is the Reno VA provides "World Class Care for Our Nation's Heroes"; however the Veterans receive care that is below community standards.

Several themes are repeated throughout the OMI report: chronic system-wide staff shortages, lack of mandated and basic clinical services, lack of oversight of services, noncompliance with VA Directives and an inability to define a plan to meet the needs of patients throughout the Reno VA system. These systemic failures lead to scenarios that should never happen, such as the Chief of Staff causing a two month delay in cancer diagnosis and treatment in two patients. Instead of spending money on pain specialists, the Reno VA has chosen to give more narcotics for chronic pain, as seen by the prescribing of narcotics at a much higher rate than the national VA average. Patient falls occur at a higher rate than the national VA average but hiring more nurses to prevent that has not happened. Nurses are injured at a much higher rate than the national VA average, which further significantly decreases the number of nursing staff available to take care of Veterans. Clinical information from over 4,500 outpatient clinic visits was "lost" due to administration trying to meet performance measures. The OMI report is filled with numerous examples of the breakdown in patient care due to systemic mismanagement, abuse of power, corruption and concern only with the façade of the "numbers" making Dr. Schlegelmilch look good. The caregivers are faced with an impossible situation of being trapped in a system that refuses to give them the tools and resources to provide the best care possible to our Veterans. Reno VA leadership has dismissed the Union's letter of concern as the grumblings of a few disgruntled employees; however, the OMI report proves the Union was correct in its concerns about the substandard care provided to Veterans.

The Union thanks and stands behind all current and former employees who have risked their livelihoods and careers to come forward to expose the truth regarding the woefully inadequate care provided to the Veterans at the Reno VA. **The current executive leadership has shamefully failed our Veterans on multiple levels and breached the trust and faith our Veterans and the taxpayers have placed in the VA healthcare system.** The Union requests assistance from Congress, Veterans groups and the public to expediently remove the Director and other executive management members and install proven, effective leaders who will fulfill our promise to those who have served.

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