



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0504

<http://feinstein.senate.gov>

April 30, 2014

Richard J. Griffin
Acting Inspector General
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Mr. Griffin,

I write today to request that you expand the scope of your current inquiry into proper patient care by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Health System in Phoenix Arizona in order to determine to what extent patient health and welfare was compromised, and to determine if similar actions are occurring at other VA health facilities. I am deeply disturbed by recent allegations that the Phoenix VA Health Care System used two sets of records to keep long patient wait times off the books, resulting in the deaths of as many as 40 veterans while awaiting care.

Given the allegations of wrongful deaths at the Phoenix VA, I specifically recommend that your existing review of the waitlist policy and patient file management decisions at the Phoenix VA Health Care System address:

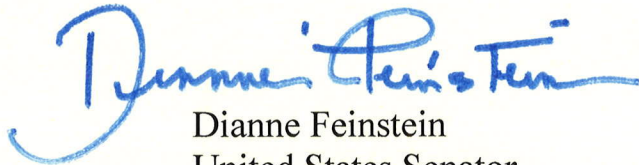
- Was the recently discovered Phoenix incident isolated, or is this occurring at other VA facilities?
- To what extent did this practice contribute to negative health outcomes and patient deaths?
- To what extent were the actions criminal or characterized by medical malpractice?
- To what extent was proper and timely medical care for serious and life threatening conditions denied to veterans?

- What management controls or preventative measures can be instituted to prevent recurrence?

On April 3, 2014, the Center for Investigative Reporting released an article detailing that the VA has paid out over \$200 million across nearly 1,000 cases of wrongful death cases during the decade following 9/11. Provided the national prevalence of these wrongful deaths, it is my opinion that a broader assessment could help ensure no other veterans suffer similar circumstances while seeking access to patient care.

Thank you for your consideration of my recommendations about evaluating patient care delivery by the Department. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, or have your staff contact Tristan Colonius in my office at 202-224-2004.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

DF/tc/jd