

**Administrative Closure**

Compromised Patient Safety and Privacy  
at the New Mexico VA Health Care System  
Albuquerque, New Mexico  
Project Number: 2006-02927-HI-0405

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Veteran Integrated System Network (VISN) 18 authorities contacted the Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Inspector General (OIG), Office of Healthcare Inspections (OHI) to review an allegation regarding the presence of a nine-year-old child in the operating room (OR) suite at the New Mexico VA Health Care System (system), Albuquerque, NM.

Background

The complainant alleged that on June 31, 2006, an [redacted] (NM) allowed a nine-year-old child, relative of an employee, to observe four<sup>1</sup> surgeries in the OR. The cases included: a carotid endarterectomy, a fractured ankle repair, a prostatectomy, and an open heart procedure. The child was removed from the OR after a physician assistant saw her on an elevated riser peering over the drapes leaning into the sterile field without protective eyewear.

(b)(6)

The Nurse Executive (NE) was notified of the incident on July 3, and the system Director was notified on July 7. The VISN was subsequently informed. The [redacted] was placed on authorized absence as of July 12, and is pending retirement in December 2006. The [redacted] was placed on an administrative detail July 5, and subsequently retired from the system on July 13.

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From July 24 through 26, at the request of the VISN, the Administrative Investigation Board (AIB) conducted a review of the circumstances surrounding this issue. On September 1, the investigation report with conclusions and analysis was completed.

Actions taken for the AIB

During the months of July and August 2006, MCM 112-4, Access in the Operating Room, which addresses the consent process for visitors was reviewed with all perioperative staff and with the surgical providers in October at their staff meeting. MCM 118-12, Visitors and Visiting, has been amended to state that children under age 14 will be excluded from spacial procedures areas such as the OR, etc. A pass card system has also been implemented to control entrance into the OR suite.

MCM 11-21, Informed Consent, is under revision to include consent for visitors in procedural areas, with completion date of November 1, 2006.

<sup>1</sup> There were a total of five patients involved in this case.

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(b)(6) All [redacted] have been reminded to notify the Associate Chief of Nursing Service of any unusual exceptions to the medical center policy that occur in their clinical areas of responsibility. In addition, the role expectations for the circulating nurse were reviewed with the appropriate OR staff.

#### Conclusions

The allegation regarding the presence of a child in the operating room is substantiated. Based on our review of the AIB, we concluded management had promptly addressed the allegation and taken appropriate actions. We make no recommendations.