

Administrative Closure
Alleged Inappropriate Treatment
VA Puget Sound Health Care System
(2007-01995-CR-0012/HI-0336)

The Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Inspector General, Office of Healthcare Inspections reviewed allegations regarding inappropriate treatment provided by clinicians at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System. The complainant wrote a letter to Senator Lisa Murkowski requesting a review of the allegations.

The complainant alleged that:

Abdominal surgery at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System was performed by a student.

Complaints of sterility and impotency following the surgery were unprofessionally addressed by a student and have not been addressed to his satisfaction.

Review Results

The complainant is an (b)(3):38 U.S.C. with a history of benign prostatic hypertrophy, hypertension, and coronary artery disease with episodes of non-exertional angina that were relieved with sublingual Nitroglycerin. In September 2002, he had surgery to repair an abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA).

The operative report reflects that the surgical team consisted of the vascular attending surgeon, a vascular fellow, and a surgical resident. There were no difficulties noted during the operation. The progress notes reflect an appropriate level of supervision by the attending surgeon during the course of the hospitalization. The medical record documentation does not reflect any complaint of sterility and/or impotency (erectile dysfunction) made by the complainant during the hospitalization.

The complainant alleges that current genitourinary (GU) issues (incontinence and erectile dysfunction) are a result of the AAA repair surgery. Erectile dysfunction is a known potential side effect of this surgery.¹ The medical record shows that the complainant spoke to a primary care provider concerning erectile dysfunction during scheduled appointments in June 2003, September 2003, and February 2007. During these visits, the primary care provider documented discussions that, due to the complainant's cardiac history and his use of sublingual Nitroglycerin, any medication used to treat erectile dysfunction would be contraindicated. The clinic notes indicate that the complainant expressed understanding. Since 2003, the complainant has requested and received two urology consults to discuss the GU issues. At the time of this review, the complainant was in the process of the second urology consult.

¹ J.C. Jimenez, M.M. Smith, and S.E. Wilson, "Sexual Dysfunction in Men after Open or Endovascular Repair of Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms," *Vascular*, May-Jun: 12(3), (2004):186-91.

Conclusions

We found that the AAA surgery was appropriately supervised by the attending surgeon and that clinicians provided consistently appropriate evaluations and discussions of the available options to address the complainant's GU issues. Therefore, we are closing this case without making recommendations or issuing a formal report.

Prepared by: Signed Date: _____
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