

**Administrative Closure**  
**Pharmacy Wait Time and Supply Availability**  
**VA North Texas Health Care System (549/00)**  
**Dallas, TX**  
**MCI # 2012-03253-HI-0413**

The VA Office of Inspector General Office of Healthcare Inspections received allegations from anonymous complainants that at VA North Texas Health Care System, Dallas, TX (facility):

- Prescribed wound care and ostomy supplies are out-of-stock at the outpatient pharmacy and supplies that are available for inpatients are not available for outpatients.
- Outpatient pharmacy wait times are often greater than 4 hours.
- Supplies are no longer kept in supply rooms in inpatient care areas and staff has “to scrounge for the things we need.”
- The facility’s New Product Committee did not meet in 2011.

We conducted an onsite review on June 26, 2012. We interviewed staff and reviewed policies and procedures, prescription data, and supply-related documents.

We substantiated that prescribed wound care and ostomy supplies are not always available at the outpatient pharmacy and that supplies provided by central supply for use by inpatients are not always the same supplies available for these patients when discharged home. If a specific medication is out-of-stock, pharmacy will automatically provide a VA-formulary alternative, provide an alternative according to local policy, or contact the prescribing provider. If an expendable supply product is not available, pharmacy will contact the prescribing provider to determine if there is an alternative product for short- or long-term use. If there is no local alternative, prescriptions are forwarded to the Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy (CMOP) to be filled. We reviewed a list of prescriptions that could not be filled immediately by the CMOP from December 2011 to June 22, 2012. Of the 2438 prescriptions, 106 (4 percent) were for wound and ostomy supplies. Pharmacy Service has plans to optimize the management of wound care and ostomy supplies to decrease the incidence of local supply shortage. Pharmacy and Logistics Services also have plans to coordinate efforts to standardize supplies so that the same products are available for both inpatient and outpatient use.

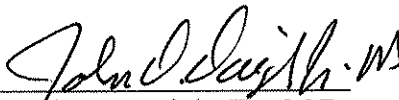
We did not substantiate that outpatient pharmacy wait times greater than 4 hours are typical. We reviewed the monthly average prescription processing times and perceived wait times for each month from October 1, 2010 through May 2012. The average monthly processing time was 20 minutes, while the average perceived wait time was 62 minutes. The average processing time was below VHA’s requirement of 30 minutes or less.<sup>1</sup> We did not substantiate that central supply rooms in patient care areas are no longer in use or that patient care supplies are not furnished when needed. All inpatient care areas have supply rooms that are stocked by Logistics Service. When requested, supplies are provided from local stock or ordered.

We substantiated that the facility’s New Product Committee had not met recently. The committee meetings were poorly attended and infrequently held prior to being discontinued in FY 2011. The committee is being reconstituted to comply with GAO recommendations related

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<sup>1</sup> VHA Handbook 1108.05, *Outpatient Pharmacy Services*, May 30, 2006.

to product oversight.<sup>2</sup> A draft policy outlining the purpose and responsibilities of the new Clinical Product Review Committee had been completed and the first meeting is scheduled for the week of July 9, 2012.

Approved by:   
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<sup>2</sup> GAO Report to Congressional Requesters, *VA Health Care – Weakness in Policies and Oversight Governing Medical Supplies and Equipment Pose Risks to veterans’ Safety*, May 2011.