



**Administrative Closure  
Cardiology Patient Care Delays  
New Mexico VA Health Care System (501/00)  
Albuquerque, New Mexico  
MCI #2014-03184-HI-0504**

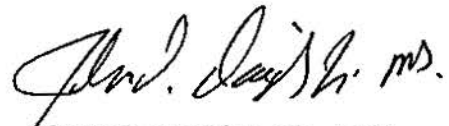
The VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) Office of Healthcare Inspections received allegations from an anonymous complainant through a media source and Senator Tom Udall's office about patient care delays and clinic inefficiencies at the New Mexico VA Health Care System (facility) in Albuquerque, NM. The allegations were that: (1) the facility has extended wait times for appointments and procedures; (2) the facility uses secret wait lists; (3) VA officials covered up wait time issues and secret wait lists; (4) a patient with a deteriorating heart condition requested to see a doctor on March 19, 2014, but was not seen until May 16, 2014, when admitted for decompensated heart failure; and (5) only 36 patients are seen weekly on average in the cardiology clinic despite there being 8 cardiology physicians in the department. OIG Office of Investigations addressed the allegations of extended wait times, secret wait lists, and cover-up of these issues. OIG Office of Healthcare Inspections addressed the remaining allegations of deficient patient care.

We conducted an offsite review August 11–20, 2014. We reviewed Veterans Health Administration Support Service Center (VSSC) cardiology clinic workload and admission data and associated electronic health records.

We did not substantiate that a patient with a deteriorating heart condition requested to see a doctor on March 19, 2014, but was not seen until May 16, 2014, when admitted for decompensated heart failure. We reviewed facility admission data available through VSSC for May 16, 2014, and identified 1 patient among the 16 facility admissions that likely represented the patient cited in the allegation. We interviewed this patient to determine if there were any delays in receiving cardiology care when requested. The patient had not experienced any issues, including delays or refusals, with receiving cardiology care when requested. Further, according to the electronic health record, the patient received cardiology follow-up care at the facility in July (repeat echocardiogram) and August (cardiology clinic appointment) after the May admission. The patient also has a future cardiology clinic appointment scheduled in September 2014.

We did not substantiate the allegation that only 36 patients are seen weekly on average in the cardiology clinic despite there being 8 cardiology physicians in the department. We reviewed facility workload data available through VSSC for fiscal years (FYs) 2013 and 2014. We found the average weekly (Monday through Friday) number of clinical encounters to be 99 encounters per week for FY 2013 and 100 encounters per week in FY 2014.

Based on our review, I am administratively closing this case.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John D. Daigh, Jr., M.D." in a cursive script.

JOHN D. DAIGH, JR., M.D.  
Assistant Inspector General for  
Healthcare Inspections