



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH  
WASHINGTON DC 20420

APR 15 2009

The Honorable Bart Gordon  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Gordon:

This is in response to your inquiry regarding the use of the endoscopic valves at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Tennessee Valley Healthcare System (TVHS) in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. I understand your concerns, and I assure you that all Veterans who may have been impacted by this were notified in writing and offered timely testing to ensure their safety.

The number of patients that have been notified and tested is included as an attachment to this letter. These numbers are those that are currently available and we will keep you informed of our progress as testing continues. To date, 339 letters were returned to TVHS with incorrect addresses, and these patients have been contacted by telephone. In addition, 19 letters were identified as undeliverable, and the TVHS Homeless Coordinator and local Operation Stand Down officials are attempting to locate these individuals to offer testing.

VA is continuing the process of testing and counseling Veterans who may be affected by this issue. Please be assured that VA will counsel and care for any Veteran who tests positive for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, or HIV as a result of this incident. Special clinics have been established within the Infectious Disease Program at TVHS. Testing is being offered to Veterans at both the Murfreesboro and Nashville campuses of TVHS, community based outpatient clinics (CBOCs), or through arrangements with community labs, whichever is most convenient to the Veteran.

This is an unfortunate incident, but we are confident that appropriate steps are being taken to ensure Veterans are notified, tested, and cared for.

Your continuing support of the welfare of our Nation's Veterans is appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Kussman".

Michael J. Kussman, MD, MS, MACP

Enclosure

**ENDOSCOPE UPDATE-OFFICIAL PATIENT NOTIFICATION NUMBERS  
VA TENNESSEE VALLEY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM (MURFREESBORO)**

**As reported 4-6-09**

	<b>Murfreesboro</b>
Numbers potentially affected (Risk Pool)	6387
Numbers notified	6387
Responded to disclosure or called	5495**
Declined Testing or Appointment	344
Notified of Results	2757
Total # Tested with Results*	2757
Total # of Calls to Toll Free Info Hotline	6637
Unverified Positive tests not previously in system. These are not necessarily linked to any endoscopy issues and the evaluation continues.	
- HBV	4
- HCV	7
- HIV	1
	Continuing to work on notifying individuals whose letters have been returned as undeliverable, and working with homeless coordinators to reach veterans with no known home address.

\* We are unable to determine the exact number of patients tested due to the fact that they may have gone to another center, or outside of VA system.

\*\* VA continues notification procedures