

VA Scandal: A Battlefield of Deceit, Delays and Death for Veterans

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The VA has many truly dedicated doctors, nurses, and health professionals who do their best to genuinely serve America's veterans. I salute their conscientious work and commitment under difficult conditions, often in a culture of fear and intimidation if they identify problems.

News headlines since the Phoenix scandal first broke in late April, however, clearly show a dark underbelly in the VA that is the antithesis of dedication to patients. It speaks of a "Code of Corruption," not the Military's Code of Honor that America's veterans have upheld.

The U.S. military has an admirable code of ethics: duty, honor, and sacrifice. Their Code is to protect the vulnerable, shield civilians when possible, watch their fellow soldier's back, and leave no one behind in combat. Our soldiers, holding themselves to these standards, trusted that the country they served would also honor its commitment to them for medical care when needed.

Now we see VA bureaucrats, administrators, and politicians whose only "Code" seems to be the opposite of the military ethos: lie, cover up, cheat to protect my income at all costs, even if veterans die while I cook the books.

Recent headlines tell the story eloquently:

- "VA Internal Audit: Wait-list Fraud Found at 64% of VA Facilities"
- "VA Denies Coverage for US Air Force Veteran with Malignant Brain Tumor"
- "VA IG report confirms: 1,700 vets seeking care weren't on official wait list at Phoenix VA, wait times for others averaged 115 days"
- Do Not "...send out any more non-VA care GI requests for endoscopy until further notice,"
- "Deaths at Phoenix VA Hospital May Be Tied to Delayed Care"

When I worked in a VA early in my career, there were problems with wait times, busy emergency departments, overloaded doctors and nurses, and a shortage of specialists. Overall, however, veterans were treated with compassion, concern, and appropriate care.

Now, however, the VA has seemingly become a Machiavellian extension of the very battlefields veterans thought they were leaving when they came home. Today's whistleblowers describe a degree of callousness, deceit, greed, nest feathering, denial of proper care, and outright malevolence at multiple VA hospitals that is orders of magnitude worse than anything I ever saw in the VA years ago.

Across the U.S., the Code of Corruption means that administrators set up secret waiting lists to hide outrageously long wait times. The falsified wait times improved their "outcomes" to qualify for financial bonuses. Corrupt, self-interested actions are common in government-run systems that have no accountability and little oversight. Good employees who want to speak out are threatened with job loss and career damage.

Not everyone has been silenced by the intimidation. Courageous whistleblowers continue to come forward with more disturbing data almost daily. They provide a portent of what is to come for all Americans under the government-run Obamacare, when its full impact hits after 2016 elections.

Here are some recent examples:

- In Phoenix, 40 veterans died while waiting to see a doctor, 1700 were confirmed to be on a secret waiting list, and others' average wait times were almost 4 months. Yet the hospital administrator was paid a \$9,000 bonus for her "quality outcomes."
- Falsified records about wait times have been reported so far in Ft. Collins, Wyoming, San Antonio, Austin, Albuquerque, and Chicago.
- Pittsburgh VA employees have been accused of covering up veterans' deaths from contaminated water supplies
- Los Angeles kept more than 60 veterans' bodies in a morgue for over a year without proper burial.
- Currently, it takes veterans about 160 days to access health benefits once back in the U.S. There is a backlog of close to 350,000 benefits claims to be processed.
- According to the Cato Institute, appeals of VA decisions have an average wait time of 1,598 days-that is 53 months, or 4.4 years!

This is the same "death by bureaucracy" that we have seen in Canada and England under medical systems controlled by government agents rather than medical professionals answering to the needs of patients.

Will YOUR life be next when we move into "the-VA-for-all" of Obamacare?

As a Nation, we must restore our Moral Compass that values individual life as God's gift, not the Government's.