The American Legion

For God and Country

bulletin

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission
1608 K Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20006
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VA WARNS OF POTENTIAL RISK TO THOUSANDS DUE TO VA PROSTATE CHECKS 1989 to 2003

On May 8 VA sent letters to 2,075 veterans informing them of a "slight risk" of exposure to viruses including HIV and hepatitis B and C at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center, according to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.* Those VA contacted may have been exposed to infection due to an improperly sterilized biopsy transrectal transducer which is used to provide biopsy specimens from patients suspected of having prostrate cancer. VA only this year seems to have discovered that cleaning of the transducer was performed imperfectly from 1989 to 2003. Another 21,000 men treated at some 21 VA's around the country may also be at risk and will receive warning letters from VA. All patients contacted are being asked to be tested as soon as possible. Of the 304 who already have received blood tests none have tested positive for HIV, Hepatitis B or C. Since 2003 the transducer has been replaced by new equipment that does not present the same hazard.

The problem, according to VA Central Office, is not that the equipment was not sterilized, it was, but that the channel internal to the machine, that draws off the specimen as well as

contaminants, was not cleaned with a brush. Apparently the manufacturer was not clear upon this point in its directions for use.

For further information concerning Milwaukee patients and their potential exposure, please contact: 888 469-6614 Ext. 45265.

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