

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 9, 2009

Charlie Norwood VA Offers Veterans Free Screenings

AUGUSTA, GA – The Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center is notifying 1,200 veterans of the availability of free screenings for infections for those who had procedures performed in the ear, nose and throat (ENT) clinic from January 2008 through November 2008. These patients may have been exposed to infection because the instrument used in the procedure was improperly disinfected.

Though the risk is extremely small, it was not possible to rule out the possibility that one or more patients were exposed to an infection, therefore VA decided to notify patients of the situation. This conservative approach is in the best interest of our veterans and is consistent with VA's policy to disclose all significant adverse events to patients.

Letters are being sent on February 9th and 10th to patients who underwent endoscopy procedures of the nose and throat between January 2, 2008 and November 6, 2008, to inform them of a low exposure risk to infection. Though unlikely an infection such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, or HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) could have been spread from one patient to another.

The notification and subsequent screenings are part of the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center's commitment to provide quality care to our veteran population. In addition to screenings, a Nurse Communication Center hotline has been established to enable those veterans notified to make expedited appointments and receive additional information. Patients can call (706) 731-7229 or 1-888-483-9674 Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm. After hours, a nurse is available to answer questions by calling 1-800-836-5561.

The Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center emphasizes that screening is strictly precautionary and does not indicate any patients have contracted an infection. The risk is minimal.

This notification only applies to patients who had an endoscopy procedure of the nose or throat in the ENT clinic performed from January 2, 2008 through November 6, 2008.

The process has been corrected and there is no increased risk to patients who have had this procedure outside of these dates.

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