



U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

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July 14, 2005

The Special Counsel

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Re: OSC File Nos. DI-04-0685 and DI-04-0765

Dear Mr. President:

I received disclosures from two whistleblowers at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), VA Medical Center (VAMC), Sheridan, Wyoming, regarding a serious threat to the health of the VAMC's psychiatric patients. Specifically, the whistleblowers, Drs. Dennis Beshara and Jane Holtzclaw, psychiatrists, alleged that their colleague, Dr. Anup Sidhu, psychiatrist, is intentionally misdiagnosing numerous VA mental health patients and over-prescribing certain medications, thereby creating a substantial and specific danger to public health. The medications that Dr. Sidhu is prescribing to his patients at an alarmingly high rate – Seroquel®, Neurontin®, and Trileptal® – each have potentially serious side effects, including tardive dyskinesia,¹ neuroleptic malignant syndrome,² and diabetes (Seroquel), increased risk of cancer (Neurontin), and severe headaches (Trileptal). The whistleblowers also alleged that Dr. Sidhu routinely discontinues patients' antidepressant medications in an abrupt manner, which increases their risk of suicide. As discussed in the attached Analysis of Disclosures, an agency investigation failed to substantiate the whistleblowers' allegations. I reviewed the agency's report and supplemental report and found them to be deficient.

I required the Honorable Anthony J. Principi, former Secretary of Veterans Affairs, to conduct an investigation into Drs. Beshara and Holtzclaw's disclosures pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 1213(c) and (d). The former Secretary delegated authority to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to conduct an investigation and to sign the agency report. The OIG submitted a report to this office on August 31, 2004. We informed the OIG that the report did not satisfy the requirements of § 1213(d) in several respects, and the OIG submitted a supplemental report on November 22, 2004. Drs. Beshara and Holtzclaw commented on the agency reports; their comments are attached. As required by law, § 1213(e)(3), I am now transmitting the reports to you.

We have reviewed the original disclosures and the agency report and supplemental report as well as the whistleblowers' comments. We have determined that the agency reports are

¹ A syndrome marked by repetitive, involuntary, purposeless movements.

² A life-threatening condition characterized by fever, muscular rigidity, altered mental status and autonomic dysfunction.

The President

Page 2

incomplete, and the agency's findings do not appear to be reasonable. Specifically, we concluded that the agency did not allow the whistleblowers an adequate opportunity to present their allegations to the investigators, the agency reports do not adequately address several of the issues OSC referred for investigation, and the agency failed to take appropriate corrective and/or disciplinary action in response to the investigation's findings.

As required by § 1213(e)(3), I have sent a copy of the report and supplemental report and Drs. Beshara and Holtzclaw's comments to the Chairmen of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs. We have also filed copies of the report and supplemental report and a copy of the whistleblowers' comments in our public file and closed the matter.

Respectfully,



Scott J. Bloch

Enclosures