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Whistleblowers Reveal Hundreds of VA Patients Improperly Waitlisted for Endoscopy Procedures

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, D.C./February 7, 2019 – The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) has [alerted](#) the President and Congress to wait time problems associated with endoscopy procedures at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in Orlando, Florida (Orlando VAMC). Whistleblowers alerted OSC to the unacceptable backlog alleging that approximately 453 veterans at the Orlando VAMC were awaiting endoscopy procedures with wait times exceeding 30 days from the date deemed clinically appropriate by a VA health care provider. OSC [referred](#) the matter for investigation to the agency, which [substantiated](#) all of the whistleblowers' allegations.

"I have great admiration for the whistleblowers who brought this serious matter to our attention," said Special Counsel Henry J. Kerner. "Because of their intrepid allegiance to the VA's mission, these disclosures ensured that veterans received the care they deserve."

The VA's [report](#) determined that the rate of colonoscopy screenings for at-risk veterans within 180 days or less of identifying positive preliminary indicators was declining. This drop increased the risk of delays in diagnosis and treatment of colorectal cancer. The report further acknowledged that the wait times between preliminary evaluations and colonoscopies appeared to be increasing, and thus, raising the risk for other medical conditions to worsen and complicating the ability to complete the colonoscopy.

As a result of the investigation, the VA contacted 245 veterans who were patients on the waitlist at the Orlando VAMC and offered them community care to ensure they have access to timely endoscopy procedures.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is an independent federal investigative and prosecutorial agency. Our basic authorities come from four federal statutes: The Civil Service Reform Act, the Whistleblower Protection Act, the Hatch Act, and the Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). OSC's primary mission is to safeguard the merit system by protecting federal employees and applicants from prohibited personnel practices, especially reprisal for whistleblowing, and to serve as a safe channel for allegations of wrongdoing. For more information, please visit our website at www.osc.gov.