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## Veterans Affairs Whistleblower Exposes Intentional Manipulation of Patient Data

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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In a [letter](#) sent to the White House and Congress on Friday, the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) reported that the Louis A. Johnson Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center intentionally manipulated patient data to artificially reduce reported wait times and the volume of patient visits. A confidential whistleblower came to OSC with the disclosures of data manipulation, prompting an investigation.

According to the VA investigative [report](#), over the last seven years a manager at the Clarksburg, West Virginia facility attempted to influence nursing staff to place emergency patients in two unofficial clinics, rather than record their emergency department encounter. The decision to create these clinics within the emergency department violated VA Directives and prevented an accurate analysis of staff workload. It also gave the false impression that the Primary Care clinic had a greater workload and demand for services.

The VA also improperly coded patient encounters for medical billing purposes. The VA informed OSC it charged 602 veterans an incorrect copayment, resulting in a total lost revenue of \$21,070 for the clinic.

In response, the VA facility immediately discontinued the practice, developed a process for clinic approvals, and educated leadership and staff on the requirements contained in agency directives violated in this matter. The agency is currently determining how to recoup lost payments. In addition, the VA counseled the manager responsible for the creation of these improper clinics.

“Whistleblowers who bring agency wrongdoing to light perform a valuable public service and deserve our gratitude,” said Acting Special Counsel Tristan Leavitt. “Manipulating data to reduce reported wait times is an unscrupulous use of taxpayer dollars and unfair to veterans. I applaud the immediate response by the Johnson VA Medical Center to correct these deficiencies.”

The remaining documents associated with the case can be found in our [public file](#).

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*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](http://www.osc.gov).*