Comments to Agency Supplemental Report

I am pleased to be informed that the Ralph Johnson Veteran's Administration Medical Center in Charleston, South Carolina has taken steps recommended to correct the clinical practice issues that existed with Ms. Ryan and Ms. Coish, nurse practitioners who were assigned positions in the mental health service line without appropriate training, education and certification. Veterans of this nation who are affected by serious mental illnesses are a precious population and the safety of the care provided to them must be maintained.

I would like to state again that Ms. Coish was hired into a position in the mental health service line after I pointed out at her job interview that her certification and training were not in line with VA Handbook 5005/27 Part II, Appendix G6. The issue of Ms. Coish's qualifications to practice as a psychiatric /mental health nurse practitioner was raised by me to the nurse manager at the time of this nurses' orientation. I declined to take responsibility for evaluating the psychiatric /mental health nurse practitioner prescribing practice of Ms. Coish and her ability to diagnose and treat veterans with a serious mental illness. I am not aware of any effort to correct this inappropriate nursing practice because Ms. Coish continued to work in the same position until she was removed at the recommendations resulting from a special review several years later.

It is my hope that nursing personnel's practice at the Ralph Johnson VAMC in Charleston, South Carolina is aligned with appropriate education, certification and licensure to assure that mental health care to our veterans is not compromised.

The retrospective case review of the two nurse practitioners (Ms. Coish and Ms. Ryan) according to the report was conducted by Dr. Jeffery Culver, the acting Chief of mental health services at the Ralph Johnson VA Medical Center. This was an internal review. The problem that exist is an internal problem. This could very well represent a conflict of interest.