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February 2, 2015

Judy McKee
Director
William S. Middleton
Memorial Veterans Hospital
2500 Overlook Terrace
Madison, Wisconsin 53705

Dear Director McKee,

In light of the recent reports on the misuse of opioids at the Tomah Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC), I am not only very concerned about the pain management practices at Tomah, but also nationwide. I am reaching out to the facilities that serve Wisconsin veterans in search of answers about pain management practices.

I appreciate that the Department of Veterans Affairs has launched an investigation into the pain management practices at the Tomah VAMC. However, I believe pain management must be addressed throughout the entire Veterans Health system. Last May, the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General released a report titled, "VA Patterns of Dispensing Take-Home Opioids and Monitoring Patients on Opioid Therapy". This report found that only "38.8 percent of the opioid patients received medication management or pharmacy reconciliation," even though it is frequent that opioid patients have complex conditions, "making them more likely to be given multiple medications that can interact dangerously with opioid medications." These numbers are troubling.

After repeated visits and many conversations with Wisconsin veterans, I remain convinced that our local facilities continue to provide quality care. Nonetheless, we in Congress need to identify the problems and steps necessary to ensure all veterans have timely access to the care they deserve.

- What policies does your facility have in place to ensure pain management is safe and effective?
- How is your facility working to ensure that patients with complex pain receive medication management and pharmacy reconciliation?
- What progress has your facility seen since the launch of the Department of Veterans Affairs Opioid Safety Initiative?

Throughout the nation, our VA health facilities must take a look at the use of opioids and address shortfalls in pain management practices. I look forward to working with you and my colleagues in Congress so that the men and women serving in our armed forces receive the quality care they deserve. I remain committed to my promise to leave no veteran behind.

Sincerely,



Ron Kind
Member of Congress

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