

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

January 12, 2015

Secretary Robert McDonald  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald,

It has been reported that doctors at the Veterans Affairs medical center in Tomah, Wisconsin are overprescribing opiates. From 2004 to 2012, opiate prescriptions have quintupled. This is severely alarming.

In response to recent reports, I request an immediate investigation into the use of painkillers at the Tomah VA Medical Center. Specifically, I would like the following questions addressed:

- How does the rate of opiate prescriptions and use per the number of patients compare between the Tomah VA Medical Center and other VA Medical Centers throughout Wisconsin?
- How does the Tomah VA Medical Center compare nationally?
- If results find that VA Medical Centers prescribe unusually high total opioid amounts, then what is the Department of Veterans Affairs doing to address the problem?

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) recently conducted a similar investigation into the prescribing practices at the Tomah VA. OIG Report MCI# 2011-04212-HI-0267 specifically states that the inspection "raised potentially serious concerns" and found that the Tomah VA "was likewise prescribing an unusually high total opioid amount".

- What has been done to implement the recommendations from this report?
- What remaining steps does the Department of Veterans Affairs intend to take to implement the recommendations of this report?

Although, I remain convinced that our Wisconsin facilities provide quality care for our veterans, these reports about inappropriate prescription levels are alarming and we must address these issues head-on. It is our duty to investigate these allegations fully and ensure that our veterans are receiving the best care possible. I look forward to working with you and our colleagues so that the men and women who have served in our armed forces receive the quality care they deserve.

Sincerely,



Ron Kind  
Member of Congress