

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
CONNECTICUT

COMMITTEES:

AGING

ARMED SERVICES

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

JUDICIARY

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 16, 2018

706 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-2823
FAX: (202) 224-9673

90 STATE HOUSE SQUARE, TENTH FLOOR
HARTFORD, CT 06103
(860) 258-6940
FAX: (860) 258-6958

915 LAFAYETTE BOULEVARD, SUITE 304
BRIDGEPORT, CT 06604
(203) 330-0598
FAX: (203) 330-0608

<http://blumenthal.senate.gov>

The Honorable Michael J. Missal
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Inspector General
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Mr. Missal:

I am deeply disturbed by a recent claim of medical malpractice at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Hospital in West Haven, Connecticut. Last week, Army veteran and Connecticut resident, Mr. Glenford Turner filed malpractice complaint against the VA, seeking unspecified compensatory damages after doctors found a scalpel inside his abdomen. I request you conduct a full investigation into all the facts surrounding Mr. Turner's case to determine what systemic factors could have led to such negligence as well as assess whether all appropriate standards are being followed at the West Haven VA.

According to recent reports, the scalpel was left in Mr. Turner's abdomen during an August 2013 prostate cancer procedure he received at the VA Hospital in West Haven – resulting in nearly four years of severe abdominal pain. In April 2017, Mr. Turner had surgery to remove the scalpel after x-rays revealed it located between his stomach and intestines. These reports are extremely concerning and must be immediately investigated to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all veterans seeking care not only in West Haven – but in every VA facility nationwide.

The complaint in this case indicates that the doctor admitted responsibility to the veteran and that a tort claim was filed but that the VA never responded to such filing. If the doctor's admission is true and the VA did not take steps to resolve the claim, then the agency has compounded the medical negligence. As such, I ask that you conduct a full investigation into the surgical procedures in Mr. Turner's case, the surgical procedures used at the VA Hospital in West Haven, as well as the policies and procedures the VA uses under the Federal Tort Claims Act.

Transparency and full information regarding the circumstances around this case are absolutely necessary to ensure accountability. Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate