

IG: Improvements in VA endoscopic equipment use

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Writer

(AP) -- Inspections show that Veterans Department medical facilities have made significant progress on fixing endoscopic procedure problems that potentially exposed thousands to HIV and other infections.

The VA's inspector general said in a new report released Friday that it did surprise visits to 128 medical facilities and that all were compliant in following procedures. It also said all but one showed it properly trained their staffs for using the devices.

The findings were a significant improvement over inspections earlier this summer at several facilities that found less than half in compliance.

About 10,000 veterans from veterans hospitals in Augusta, Ga., Miami and Murfreesboro, Tenn., were told earlier this year that they may have been exposed to infections during colonoscopies or other endoscopic procedures where equipment had been improperly cleaned.

More than 50 subsequently tested positive for infections - including at least eight who tested positive for [HIV](#). The VA has said there's no way to tell where those infections came from, but it is offering free medical treatment to all those affected.

Gerald M. Cross, the agency's acting under secretary for health, said in a statement that the IG's findings show the VA quality assurance programs "identified a risk and successfully corrected that risk on a national

scale."

The VA said it took more than 40 disciplinary actions related to what happened.

The IG said the one hospital that did not show documentation that its staff had been properly trained was the White River Junction VA Medical Center in Vermont. According to the IG, a VA official disagreed with the finding and said it was only based on the fact that there was a typographical error in the hospital's paperwork that included the word "cystoscope" rather than the correct "colonoscope."

IG report: <http://www.va.gov/oig/54/reports/VAOIG-09-02848-218.pdf>

VA hotline for questions related to the issue: 1-877-345-8555

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