

Watchdog: Staff issues affect care at reservation hospitals

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The internal watchdog of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services blames the often-substandard quality of care at hospitals serving Native Americans on outdated equipment and technology, lack of resources and difficulty attracting and keeping skilled staff.

The Office of Inspector General on Friday released two reports that look into the longstanding challenges of the facilities managed by the federal Indian Health Service. The OIG recommends the IHS come up with strategies to address the shortcomings.

The reports criticize the agency's limited oversight regarding quality of care and compliance with federal requirements. Their recommendations include more frequent inspections of some of the hospitals.

The reports come at a time when the agency faces increased scrutiny from Congress after inspections of some hospitals uncovered severe deficiencies.

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