



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0536

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Carolyn M. Clancy, M.D.
Interim Under Secretary for Health
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20420

Dear Under Secretary Clancy,

As cases of Ebola continue to be diagnosed in the United States, we must work to ensure our nation's veterans are protected. The VA health care system is America's largest integrated health care system, with over 1,700 sites of care serving more than 8 million of our nation's heroes each year. We write to ensure the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is prepared to provide comprehensive, veteran-centered care in the event of an Ebola diagnosis within the VA health care system.

Medical professionals have cited breakdowns in safety protocols and communications that led to health care workers contracting Ebola inside the United States. As best practices to combat Ebola continue to evolve, the VA must utilize all federal, state, and local resources to guarantee the most up-to-date protocols are properly utilized and the necessary personal protective equipment is readily available. We urge the VA to identify opportunities to strengthen preparedness and ensure the correct process, training and equipment is in place to protect veterans and VA medical professionals.

We are pleased that the VA has established an Ebola Virus Working Group to monitor the situation, coordinated efforts with local, state, and federal public health groups, and educated VA health care staff by providing guidance on infection control and prevention. However, we have the following questions about the Ebola preparedness of VA medical facilities:

- Does each VA medical facility have a plan in place for an infectious disease outbreak like Ebola?
- Have all VA medical facility health care professionals received the latest updated instructions and comprehensive training for handling Ebola cases, to include donning and doffing of protective gear?
- Are all VA medical facilities complying with the latest CDC guidelines regarding Ebola?
- Have all VA medical facilities conducted simulations for the care of Ebola patients and possible Ebola patient surge to ensure readiness?
- Do VA medical facilities have the latest updated list of supplies and adequate supplies for a potential infectious disease outbreak like Ebola, including, but not limited to hazmat suits that are fluid-impermeable? If not, are resources to obtain them immediately available?

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- Do VA medical facilities have properly equipped isolation rooms to ensure patient, visitor, and staff safety?
- Do VA medical facilities have proper procedures and training for the safe disposal of medical waste and linens after use?
- Have any VA medical facilities been identified to provide in-patient care to Ebola patients?

We share the VA's goals of providing veterans with the best possible care and ensuring the safety of VA health care professionals. To that end, if the answer to any of these questions is "no," we urge you to immediately act to ensure VA medical facilities are adequately prepared for Ebola. We appreciate your prompt response to confirm the VA is fully prepared to effectively treat Ebola and prevent its spread.

Sincerely,



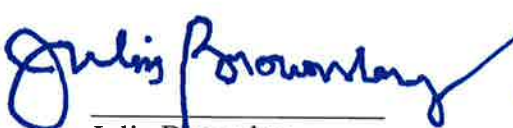
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