

Ohio panel wants more VA tests for clinic patients

By DAN SEWELL, The Associated Press

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CINCINNATI — An outside investigative task force Thursday urged the Veterans Administration to expand testing for possible infections from treatment by a southwest Ohio dentist accused of failing for years to change gloves and sterilize equipment between patients.

The Greater Dayton Area Hospital Association team's interim report also is seeking more documents, memos and information about policies and audits from the Dayton VA Medical Center, saying the material provided so far "is not complete and does not provide a clear picture or context on this situation or how it continued for such an extended period of time."

The VA has offered free screening to 535 patients who received invasive dental work such as extractions and fillings from the dentist from January 1992 through July 2010. The report Thursday urged testing for all patients seen by the dentist as well as deceased patients' next-of-kin. The Dayton Daily News reported that could mean thousands of tests.

Bryan Bucklew, president and CEO of the hospital association, said in a statement that expanding the scope of testing "will help ensure our region's veterans and their families are provided the highest quality of follow-up care after this incident and demonstrate the Dayton VA Medical Center's commitment to rectifying this situation."

The investigative task force includes doctors, nurses and other health care professionals and officials. Testing is for HIV and hepatitis B and C. The VA has said testing has confirmed two patients were newly positive for hepatitis B, which can cause liver damage, and further testing was being done to determine if they were infected at the clinic.

The VA Medical Center didn't immediately reply Thursday to a request for reaction to the report. The dentist's name isn't disclosed in the report. The VA has said it probed his practices after receiving reports last year that he had failed to consistently follow the standard of changing latex gloves and sterilizing instruments between patients.

The hospital association represents 25 hospitals and health systems in southwest and western Ohio. The VA task force was formed in 2008 and was urged this year to investigate the dental clinic situation by Ohio elected officials led by Rep. Mike Turner, R-Dayton, and Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio.

Turner said Thursday the interim report shows that many more patients need to be notified and tested

and that "many more questions are left unanswered on the part of the VA."

Turner said he has asked for additional documents to help the task force make a full assessment. That is needed for an independent community response "to the total failure to adhere to basic medical safety standards at the Dayton VA's dental practice," Turner said in a statement.

Information from: Dayton Daily News, <http://www.daytondailynews.com>

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