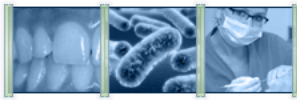




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## 9 Ohio VA dental patients test positive for hepatitis

By Rob Goszkowski, Assistant Editor

March 2, 2011 -- Of the 535 veterans potentially exposed to hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV by a dentist at a Veterans Affairs (VA) medical center in Dayton, OH, seven have tested positive for hepatitis C and two for chronic hepatitis B, VA officials told *DrBicuspid.com*.

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So far none has tested positive for HIV, according to Todd Sledge, communications officer for the VA Healthcare System of Ohio.

"Of those 535, 375 have been tested," Sledge said. "We get new test results in every day, so we'll have a better indication at the end of this week or Monday of next week. The Dayton VA has been notifying vets of results."

None of the patients had been previously diagnosed, and further testing will be needed to confirm those infections, Andrea Buck, the VA's national director of medicine, told the *Dayton Daily News*. Epidemiological testing will be used to determine if any confirmed cases resulted from exposure at the Dayton VA dental clinic, she added.

Of the 535 veterans who were exposed at the clinic from January 1, 1992, through July 28, 2010, 527 were notified by phone or certified mail, Sledge said.

"We know of the whereabouts of the others, they're just not capable of coming in for testing," he explained.

Dwight Pemberton, DDS, 81, the dentist who performed the procedures, allegedly failed to change his gloves and sterilize tools between patients, according to previous [news reports](#). Dr. Pemberton is no longer with the Dayton VA clinic, according to Sledge.

"The dentist in question on February 11 voluntarily retired, after administrative actions had been initiated," he said. "He was eligible for retirement."

The Ohio State Dental Board refused to retire Dr. Pemberton's license, an action he had requested, according to the *Dayton Daily News*. The step is considered unusual, the paper reported, unless a dentist is actively being investigated.

Last month, U.S. Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Rob Portman (R-OH), as well as U.S. Rep. Mike Turner (R-OH), wrote to VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, urging him to investigate the lack of oversight that allegedly allowed Dr. Pemberton to violate medical standards of practice over a period of 18 years.

The letter requests that Shinseki "order a review of all VA medical facility oversight policies and procedures to ensure that veterans are receiving the quality of care that they deserve and which had been promised to them." The letter also asks that a national-level Administrative Investigation Board (AIB) reinvestigate the Dayton VA facility.

The free screenings for exposed veterans is ongoing, and the VA will continue to work with those that have tested positive, according to Sledge.

"They have been assured over and over that our primary responsibility is to take care of them," Sledge said. "We'll provide ongoing testing and counseling to assure them that what is expected of us will happen."

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## "The dentist in question on February 11 voluntarily retired."

— Todd Sledge, communications officer, VA Healthcare System of Ohio

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