

KINS COMMUNITY COMMENT (442-5744)

This is Ron Pierre for Community Comment.

The Veteran's Administration scandal from Phoenix is the tip of the iceberg. Last week, as the details of this situation were reported, many of us who work every day in the world of direct support to veteran's and military personnel applauded the revelations with three words, "It's about time."

The VA has become an organization filled with corruption functioning well beyond the scope of sound organizational management practices. The VA is dysfunctional. The most relevant factor is that the VA represents an example of horrors of a "single-payer" health care system. Recognizing the corruption, examining the quota systems(read death panels), letting bureaucrats decide who gets care, and exposing non patient-center health care delivery, to the end game of Obama care and one can easily see what will eventually happen with the affordable health care act.

I take this scandal personally. I am a user of the VA system and eligible for health care services because of my military service. Moreover, because I manage a California-wide volunteer based program supporting service members returning from Afghanistan and military deployments I hear about the VA's shortfalls daily. The backlog numbers for disability evaluations and authentication of claims exceeds 200,000 with the waiting period for these evaluations averaging over 10 months. Most returning service members must rely on nonprofit organizations like Wounded Warrior Project, Fisher House, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, and many more nongovernment groups for direct service. Why.... because the VA is focused on process and system and not on direct patient care.

I need look to no further for an example of day-to-day mismanagement than the VA eligibility card I was given to show I am eligible for services. I recently received a notice that these ID cards have been compromised and the "personal identification information" can be read by a simple card reader. The VA notification stated that the VA expects to have the problem fixed in about a year. My card now lives in a file drawer.

The VA has a very large share of the Federal budget. These dollars are not wisely spent. The sheer size of the operation lends itself to corruption at multiple levels. Rather than providing direct care to patients the organization manages success on falsified numbers, bonuses for incompetent managers, and over-managed highly-touted no-impact programs. Like most over sized bureaucracies people have to die, and only when the system is exposed for its failures does the public get a look at the horrifying consequences of big government run amuck.

Last week's revelation about the VA gets even more personal than my ID card. My wife's uncle suffered for over two years under the VA system of pass around caregivers. He was shuffled from care-giver to care-giver each care giver treating a separate symptom. The VA finally gave up and referred him to a civilian doctor who diagnosed the real problem too late for him to have a chance to live. He passed away two months after the real problem was found. There was no continuity of care.

As this VA scandal unfolds, examine your own health care. Single payer health care fails every time. Don't ask me! Look in a mirror and ask the face you see if this is the kind of care you want?

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