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TOP STORIES

More than 600 veterans at Tomah VA will have their disability claims reexamined

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By Hope Kirwan | Wisconsin Public Radio

More than 600 veterans are eligible to have their disability claims reexamined after VA officials identified problems with a former doctor's work at the Tomah VA Medical Center.

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The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs **first announced** in April that the Tomah VA was reaching out to veterans who had received Neurology Compensation and Pension, or C&P, exams by former VA neurologist Dr. Mary Jo Lanska. The exam is an administrative review to determine whether an injury or condition is related to a veteran's military service, and the outcome can affect the person's disability benefits.

Minneapolis-based TV station KARE11 **started reporting** in 2022 that veterans seen by Lanska had their care and benefits improperly reduced. The VA said in April an initial review of exams performed by Lanska "determined some of those examinations were considered incomplete." The neurologist was **fired by the VA** in May.

U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough announced in a press release this month that the department has decided to offer new exams to all 649 veterans who previously had their cases reviewed by Lanska.

The new exams will be used to reevaluate the veterans' original claims, meaning disability benefits will be backdated to the original claim date. Families of veterans who have died since their original claim will also be able to have their claims reviewed.

The press release said 292 other veterans also had exams done by Lanska, but either had their original disability claims approved or their exam did not factor into their final benefits decision.

"We apologize to all of the Veterans and families who have been negatively impacted by Dr. Lanska's exams," said the VA press release. "In all cases, we encourage these Veterans to come in for their new exams as soon as possible — and we won't rest until they get the care and benefits that they deserve."

Federal lawmakers from Wisconsin celebrated the decision to provide new exams to almost all the veterans previously seen by Lanska.

Democratic U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin called the news "long overdue justice" in an interview with WPR. She said the VA's original decision to review a small sample of Lanska's cases fell short.

"It felt like if anything, it was a slap on the wrist and not recognizing that this was a problem that had impacted many veterans, and there was a systematic issue," Baldwin said. "It took a long time for the firing of the doctor who may have misdiagnosed hundreds of cases, and it shouldn't take that long. But you know, we are here now."

Republican U.S. Rep. Derrick Van Orden said in [a statement](#) he was encouraged by McDonough's decision, calling the care veterans received from Lanska "inexcusable and disgraceful."

"While this is a positive step, I remain adamant on ensuring that every veteran or their survivor is receiving the highest level of communication and clarity possible on this issue," Van Orden said in the statement.

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