Miami Veteran Sues Feds After Contracting HIV in VA Mishap

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A 55-year-old Miami veteran claiming to have contracted HIV from unsterilized equipment during a 2008 colonoscopy at a local Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital is suing the federal government for $20 million in damages, *The Miami Herald* reports.

According to the article, Juan Rivera, a 13-year Army veteran who now drives trucks for the U.S. Postal Service, filed notice on July 20. Under the Federal Torts Claim Act, the government has six months to settle before the case goes to federal court.

In March, the VA notified more than 3,000 veterans who had received colonoscopies at the Miami hospital that they might have been exposed to hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV. The number of veterans involved later rose to 3,348. VA staff reportedly rinsed the endoscopic equipment between uses but did not sterilize it.

Veterans were also exposed to blood-borne illnesses through improperly sterilized equipment at VA facilities in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and Augusta, Georgia. Out of more than 11,000 veterans at risk for infection, 8 have tested positive for HIV, 12 for hepatitis B and 37 for hepatitis C.

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