



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
Washington DC 20420

May 30, 2014

In Reply Refer To:

Karl Y. Bilimoria, MD, MS
676 N. Saint Clair St- Suite 650
Chicago, IL 60611

RE: Flexibility In duty hour Requirements for Surgical Trainees Trial - "The FIRST Trial"
- VA Rotations

Dr. Bilimoria:

The FIRST Trial is a study of resident duty hour requirements that aims to address how best to balance the development of clinical judgment, technical skills, patient ownership, and professionalism while mitigating fatigue and its effects on patient safety and resident wellbeing. In recent years, resident duty hours have been further restricted and regulated in response to an Institute of Medicine report and public pressure. However, there is concern and some evidence that these restrictions may have be detrimental to patient care and resident training. The FIRST Trial, which is sponsored and jointly funded by the American Board of Surgery (ABS), the American College of Surgeons (ACS), and the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), will explore these issues by providing high-quality empirical evidence upon which to base future resident duty hour requirement decisions. More than 95% of eligible programs in the country have already agreed to participate, demonstrating widespread support for the study from regulatory groups, professional societies, and residency programs and hospitals.

Directors at some programs aiming to participate in this study have asked whether they can also change the duty hours for their residents when they are rotating on General Surgery rotations at their affiliated VA hospitals. The simple answer is yes. Although The FIRST Trial does not currently include outcomes obtained through VA hospitals or any VA hospital patients, VA complies with the ACGME standards and adheres to the program's local schedules. For this reason, and also because VA is fundamentally interested in the results of this important trial, program directors participating in The FIRST Trial may extend the study-determined duty hour rules to their VA General Surgery residents (or those residents rotating on General Surgery services) if they find it easier to use one set of duty hour rules across all of their participating sites.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Karen M. Sanders", is positioned above the typed name.

Karen Sanders, MD
Acting Chief Officer for Academic Affiliations