Dear Sir or Madam,

[NAME OF EACH VA HOSPITAL] is notifying patients who have had open-heart surgery, about a potential infection risk related to this surgery. This is a newly discovered risk related to some of the equipment used in your surgery. We are contacting you today, as you or a member of your family have been identified in clinical records as a patient who might be affected.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are investigating reports that a device used to heat and cool the blood during surgery has been linked to a rare bacterial infection caused by *Mycobacterium chimaera*. This is a type of bacteria known as nontuberculous mycobacterium (NTM), and is not the same bacteria that cause the more recognized Tuberculosis (TB). For patients who have been exposed to these devices during their surgery, the chances of getting this infection are very low. CDC estimates the risk to be less than one percent.

This infection is very slow growing which can make it difficult to recognize and diagnose. It is possible to develop symptoms years after surgery, so it is important to know the symptoms you should watch out for. Discuss any symptoms or questions you may have with your primary care doctor. You should also be aware that this infection cannot be spread person-to-person. If you are not having any symptoms no testing needs to be done at this time.

Symptoms of an NTM infection include:

- night sweats
- muscle aches
- weight loss
- fatigue
- unexplained fever

We understand that you and your family might have additional questions or concerns about this information. To help answer them, a hotline has been established at this facility. It can be accessed at [(555) 555-5555]. The hotline will be available starting [DATE].

Sincerely,

NAME
Facility COS or Facility Director