

Understanding the New Antidepressant Policy

Happy spring, everyone.

BY NOW, you should have heard that we have changed our policy with respect to antidepressant use by airmen. On April 5, 2010, the FAA published two notices in the Federal Register, Volume 75, No. 64. The first notice is entitled "Special Issuance of Airman Medical Certificates to Applicants Being Treated with Certain Antidepressant Medications," and the second is entitled "Compliance and Enforcement Bulletin No. 2010-1." The Internet links to the announcements are:

<http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-7527.pdf>; and
<http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-7658.pdf>

On a case-by-case basis, we have

Federal Air Surgeon's Medical Bulletin

Library of Congress ISSN 1545-1518

Secretary of Transportation
Ray LaHood

FAA Administrator
J. Randolph Babbitt

Federal Air Surgeon
Fred Tilton, MD

Editor
Michael E. Wayda

The Federal Air Surgeon's Medical Bulletin is published quarterly for aviation medical examiners and others interested in aviation safety and aviation medicine. The Bulletin is prepared by the FAA's Civil Aerospace Medical Institute, with policy guidance and support from the Office of Aerospace Medicine. An Internet on-line version of the Bulletin is available at: www.faa.gov/library/reports/medical/fasmbl

Authors may submit articles and photos for publication in the Bulletin directly to:

Editor, FASMB
FAA Civil Aerospace Medical Institute
AAM-400
P.O. Box 25082
Oklahoma City, OK 73125
E-mail: Mike.Wayda@faa.gov

The Federal Air Surgeon's Column



By Fred Tilton, MD

begun to consider special issuance of medical certificates to pilots with mild-to-moderate depression who have been treated for at least 12 months on one of four antidepressant medications: fluoxetine, sertraline, citalopram, or escitalopram. This change in policy is consistent with recommendations from the Aerospace Medical Association, the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, The Air Line Pilots Association, and the International Civil Aviation Organization. The Civil Aviation Authority of Australia, Transport Canada, and the U.S. Army already allow some pilots to fly while using antidepressant medications. Pilots in all three classes that meet our requirements will be granted a special issuance for 6 to 12 months, depending upon their age and class.

We have been considering this policy change for quite a while. We are aware there are pilots who are depressed and flying without proper treatment. We are also aware that there are pilots who have been using these medications and falsifying their medical applications. These policy change announcements will encourage the first group to seek proper treatment for

their conditions and allow the second group to come forward without fear of civil enforcement action. We are confident these changes will enhance our ability to make the airspace safer for everyone. See the article by Dr. **Michael Berry** on page 1 of this bulletin for full details.

AMCS Security

And now, switching gears, I need to go back one more time to the subject of security and the Aerospace Medical Certification Subsystem (AMCS). In September you should have received a letter asking you to validate the list of your staff members who are authorized access to AMCS. In December you should have received an E-Mail again asking you to validate the list not later than January 31. As of April 5, less than 40 percent of you have responded. If you have updated your list, thank you very much, and remember, it is your responsibility to notify us whenever you lose a staff member. If you have not validated your list, please do so immediately. The security of our systems is extremely important, and we need your help to assure our airmen of their privacy.

If you did not receive the letter, the E-Mail, or both, please take a moment to make sure that you have provided us with the correct address information. It is really important that we have this information so that we can keep you up-to-date.

Thanks so much for being one of our aviation medical examiners. We greatly appreciate your service, and we could not do it without you!!

—Fred