
From the Federal Air Surgeon's Perspective

By Fred Tilton, MD

TOO GOOD NOT TO REPEAT

Hello, Everyone,

I HAVE TOLD you in the past that I do not like to talk about the same topic in two different editorials. I have already violated that principle a couple of times with respect to MedXPress, and I am doing it again.

The first time I “broke the rule” was because I wanted to make sure that you were fully informed about my decision to make MedXPress mandatory for all pilots effective October 1. I am doing it this time because I thought you might like to get some feedback on the success of the transition.

Frankly, I was a little worried as we approached the first of October. I will never forget our first MedXPress year. Although the system had been beta tested, I believed that we would find some additional issues as we “went live,” and I wanted to address any issues as soon as possible. When I told my personal aviation medical examiner that I was going to use this new system, he expressed concern because the system was brand new and he knew very little about it. In fact, I was the first of his pilots to use MedXPress. I finally convinced him to give it a try, and I also told him to call me if he experienced any problems.

Over the next couple of months I received several calls from him with some “friendly” suggestions for what I might do with this new system. I told him that I really appreciated the calls, and that his feedback would be invaluable in helping us to make the changes necessary to improve the system’s functionality.

The next year when I called his office to arrange for my medical, his office assistant informed me that he would not perform my FAA medical examination unless I used MedXPress.

Now, fast forward to last year when I announced that we were going to make MedXPress mandatory. MedXPress had already proven to be an excellent tool. Among other things, it was easier for airmen to complete their medical applications; it has significantly reduced the workload in your offices because you no longer had to transcribe the front side of the 8500-8, and it eliminated many transcription and spelling errors. However, it had been more than five years since we implemented the system, and only about 40 percent of our pilots were using it. So to take full advantage of this excellent tool, we had to make it mandatory for all.

While October 1 came and went with very little fanfare, we know we still have some work to do. We need to make the system available for air traffic controllers, we need to make some enhancements to make the system more “user friendly,” and we received some helpline calls with suggestions for system improvements. We appreciate these suggestions, and we will use them to make the system even better in the future.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank you again for your support as we made the system mandatory. As I have told you many times in the past, the service you perform for us and the airmen and air traffic controllers you support plays an absolutely crucial role in assuring the safety of the national air space.

—Fred