

from the Federal Air Surgeon's
PERSPECTIVE...MedXPress Lessons Learned

BY FRED TILTON, MD

Happy New Year, Everyone!

It has been a few months since we made the use of MedXPress mandatory for all pilots. The transition was fairly smooth, and MedXPress has made the medical application process much more efficient than the old paper system. However, we did experience some “growing pains.” I thought it might be helpful to share some of the lessons we have learned, and to let you know that we are working hard to make this system as efficient and effective as it can possibly be.

In January 2013, we received a call from an aviation medical examiner (AME) who said that he had an airman in his office who was completing his MedXPress application using the AME's computer. The airman was attempting to enter the date of his most recent exam which had been accomplished in January of 2012. However, each time the airman entered the exam date, he got an error message stating that he could not enter a future date for a previous exam. Needless to say, the airman and the AME were very frustrated. It turns out that the AME had installed his computer in 2004 and never updated the system clock. Consequently, the system would not let the airman enter a date that it “thought” was eight years into the future. Remember to keep your system's clock up to date — LESSON 1.

We received calls stating that the aerospace medical certification subsystem (AMCS) would not retrieve an application when a confirmation number was entered. MedXPress automatically eliminates applications if an airman has not provided the AME with a confirmation number within 60 days of application submission — LESSON 2.

Airmen have wished to make corrections to a submitted application, but they discovered they no longer had access. If an airman calls you with this concern, simply tell him or her you can make the corrections in your office. You can revise every item on the applicant's history page with the exception of block 20 (Applicant's National Driver Register and Certifying Declarations) — LESSON 3.

I understand some AMEs are experiencing printing problems. Some of these problems are resolved as AMEs get more familiar with the system. However, there also appear to be some issues with Adobe Reader, the free PDF Reader application. We are working to simplify the printing process, but in the meantime if you experience any printing problems, you can email us at 9-AMC-AAM-certification@faa.gov, and we will help you resolve your problem — LESSON 4.

If you do not print an airman's certificate before you leave the submission confirmation screen, the system will not allow you to print a certificate. So, remember to print **before** leaving that screen— LESSON 5. Note: I do not agree with this restriction, and you will eventually see this change.**

Applicants do not understand why the system does not automatically repopulate the history information on subsequent exams. They have also complained about having to remember exact dates from previous health professional visits. MedXPress was first designed so that it would repopulate the history. However, we had to eliminate this feature for legal reasons. For example: A 25-year-old man is seeking a third-class medical certificate. He correctly marks *no* to Item 18 l (neurological disorders; epilepsy; seizures; stroke; paralysis; etc.). When he is 28 years old, he has a seizure, which he fails to report to the FAA, and he continues to fly. When he is 30, he submits another application using MedXPress, and the system populates his application with the *no* 18 l answer from his previous exam. Our attorneys have informed us that they could not pursue legal action because the airman could allege that he simply missed this question, and the system caused him to inadvertently provide a false answer.

In order to pursue a falsification case, the airman would have to take the definitive action of actually marking the *no* answer on his new MedXPress application. It is, therefore, very unlikely that we will modify the system so that it repopulates the history. The system urges the airman to print a copy of his application so that he can bring it with him to the exam, and I am asking you to remind the airman to keep a copy in his records so that he can use it to help him complete his next exam — LESSON 6.

In regard to the dates issue, we are looking into the possibility of the system repopulating information that will never change such as tonsillectomy at age 8. In the meantime, estimated dates are perfectly acceptable — LESSON 7.

Enough lessons for one editorial. I hope this information is helpful. If you have other concerns or suggestions, please let us know immediately. We will do our best to find a resolution to all your issues so that we can provide the most “user friendly” system for you and the airmen you serve.

And, as always, thank you so much for all you do for our airmen and protecting the safety of the national airspace.

—Fred

***Note: This paragraph clarifies the previous version originally published on 2/8/2013.*