

from the Federal Air Surgeon's
PERSPECTIVE...

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11 MEDICAL CONDITIONS NO LONGER REQUIRE SPECIAL ISSUANCE, MORE TO COME SOON

Hello, Everyone,

The approximately 600,000 pilots in the United States generate close to 400,000 medical applications each year. Since we made the use of MedXPress mandatory last year, all applicants have walked into your office after having completed their applications on-line. You, our designated aviation medical examiners (AMEs), then examined those pilots, and more than ninety percent of them left your office with a medical certificate in-hand.

I can almost hear the collective sighs of relief from those pilots, because few, if any, view the medical examination as anything other than a necessary evil. Some of them actually dread the thought of their upcoming medical because they have heard of, know, or believe themselves to be “victims” of the medical examination process.

Fortunately, we have you to explain and help them through the process, and we have found ways to safely, medically certify individuals through the special issuance process who might have once been permanently disqualified. However, the applicants who required a special issuance had to have their application deferred, and they had to wait for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to make a determination.

A few years ago, we introduced the aviation medical examiner assisted special issuance process (AASI), which permitted AMEs to issue applicants a special issuance certificate at the time of examination, provided the applicant had complied with a previously defined set of conditions. The AASI process eliminated the wait time for a subset of airmen, but there were still a large number of pilots who had to wait for the FAA to make a decision in their case.

The next logical step was to reduce the number of medical conditions requiring a special issuance, and I am pleased to report that we have done just that. We began to consider that option about a year and a half ago. Members of my staff

worked hard to develop the necessary protocols, and along the way, we received some very helpful suggestions from two of your colleagues, Dr. **John (Jack) Hastings** and Dr. **Stephen Leonard**. It took us longer that we expected because we could not afford to make any changes that would compromise safety.

So far, we have identified 18 medical conditions (see list below) that will no longer require a special issuance, and we have placed the protocols for 11 of them in the *Guide for Aviation Medical Examiners (Guide)*. The rest will be added to the *Guide* in the next few months. We chose these 18 because they account for 10 to 15 percent of the special issuances.

I am very excited about these changes, and I hope you are as well. They will make the medical examination process easier for you and the airmen you serve, and it will also help us to reduce the time that other airmen experience as they wait for us to approve their special issuances for more complicated medical conditions.

In the coming months, we will continue to refine the special issuance list, as well as find other ways to enhance our certification process in our efforts to support you and the airmen you serve.

Here, as I promised earlier, is the list. It is divided into two groups. The first has already been posted in the *Guide*, and the second group will be posted soon.

Group 1: Arthritis, asthma, hepatitis C, hypertension, hypothyroidism, pre-diabetes, migraine and chronic headaches, renal cancer, testicular cancer, and prostate cancer

Group 2: Kidney stones, carotid artery stenosis, colitis and irritable bowel syndrome, colon cancer, bladder cancer, leukemia, and Hodgkin's disease and lymphoma

And, as I always say, thanks for the contribution you make to the health and safety of the airmen you serve so well.

—Fred