



MEDICAL BULLETIN

Aviation Safety Through Aerospace Medicine

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From the Federal Air Surgeon's perspective...

It Has Been an Honor and a Privilege

BY JAMES R. FRASER, MD, MPH

This is my last editorial as I will be retiring at the end of the year. After thirty years as a Navy physician and Flight Surgeon, then thirteen years in the FAA Office of Aerospace Medicine (OAM), it is time to move on. The FAA has been an awesome second career and it has been an honor and a privilege to serve (two years as Manager Medical Specialties, eight years as Deputy Federal Air Surgeon, and three years as Federal Air Surgeon). As they say in the Navy, after two to three years at the helm, it is time to move on. You have had your chance to implement your best ideas for improving the organization and it is time for someone else with fresh ideas to take the helm.

Thanks to all of you, we have accomplished a great deal during my tenure. There are many achievements in which I am proud to have played a small part. However, I am most proud of two things. First, I am proud of our enduring philosophy regarding medical certification, i.e., even though our primary mission is to keep the National Air Space (NAS) safe, our secondary mission is to get every airman up that we think can safely fly. As evidence of our commitment to this philosophy, in FY 16 we ultimately final denied only

0.06% of all airmen that were willing to work with us when they did not meet the FAA medical standards contained in 14 CFR Part 67.

Unfortunately, this willingness to work with every airman with a potentially disqualifying medical condition significantly increased the complexity of medical certification and the workload of everyone in OAM. The resolution of this issue leads me to the second accomplishment of which I am proud to have played a small part.

Historically, about ninety percent of all airmen walked out of their AMEs office with a new medical certificate. Not surprisingly, they were the ones that were most happy with our medical certification system. Unfortunately, the ten percent of airmen that were deferred were not always quite so happy because of the delay that was sometimes associated with the special issuance process.

Thanks to the hard work of my colleagues in OAM, we have made interfacing with our medical certification system far more efficient and airman friendly by leveraging the incredible knowledge and experience of you, our AMEs. We have developed and increased the number of Conditions Aviation Medical Examiners Can Issue (CACIs) and Aviation Medical Examin-

er Assisted Special Issuances (AASIs). We have improved guidance throughout our Aviation Medical Examiner Guide. We have encouraged you at basic and refresher seminars to follow the new guidance and issue rather than defer whenever possible.

In my first editorial as Federal Air Surgeon, I told you that I would like to cut that ten percent of deferred airmen, who have to take a longer path to certification, down to eight or even five percent. However, thanks to you, the FY16 data show that 97.7 percent of first- and second-class airmen were able to walk out of your offices with an airman medical certificate in hand!

None of this would have been possible without you. As AMEs you have stepped up to the plate and issued whenever possible. You have followed the evolving AME guidance and CACI work sheets. You have done your part to help build the safest and most efficient airman medical certification system in the world. Thank you!

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as your Federal Air Surgeon.

-Jim





FAA Photo by Rick Butler

Dr. Fraser was recently honored with a retirement party and reception at CAMI in Oklahoma City



FAA Photo by Rick Butler

Dr. Antunano and Dr. Fraser prepare to cut the cake



FAA Photo by Rick Butler

Dr. Fraser thanks CAMI personnel for all their hard work and support during his time as Federal Air Surgeon

