

Revocation and Determination

of

Statement of Principles concerning

OSTEOARTHRISIS

ICD-9-CM CODE: 715

Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986

1. The Repatriation Medical Authority under subsection **196B(3)** of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (the Act):
 - (a) revokes Instrument No.72 of 1995, Instrument No.337 of 1995, and Instrument No.353 of 1995; and
 - (b) determines in its place the following Statement of Principles.

Kind of injury, disease or death

2. (a) This Statement of Principles is about **osteoarthritis** and **death from osteoarthritis**.
- (b) For the purposes of this Statement of Principles, **“osteoarthritis”** means a heterogenous group of clinical joint disorders, associated with inflammation of the synovium and defective integrity of the articular cartilage and related changes in the underlying bone and joint margins, and which has the following clinical characteristics:
 - (a) a history of pain;
 - (b) impaired function;
 - (c) joint swelling; and
 - (d) stiffness,
attracting ICD-9-CM code 715.

Basis for determining the factors

3. On the sound medical-scientific evidence available, the Repatriation Medical Authority is of the view that it is more probable than not that **osteoarthritis and death from osteoarthritis** can be related to relevant service rendered by veterans or members of the Forces.

Factors that must be related to service

4. Subject to clause 6, at least one of the factors set out in clause 5 must be related to any relevant service rendered by the person.

Factors

5. The factors that must exist before it can be said that, on the balance of probabilities, **osteoarthritis or death from osteoarthritis** is connected with the circumstances of a person's relevant service are:
 - (a) suffering inflammatory joint disease in a joint before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
 - (b) suffering from septic arthritis in a joint before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
 - (c) suffering an intra-articular fracture of a joint before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
 - (d) having a malalignment of a joint before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
 - (e) being obese for at least 10 years, within the 25 years immediately before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in either knee joint; or
 - (f) suffering from a depositional joint disease in a joint before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
 - (g) suffering from permanent ligamentous instability of a joint before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
 - (h) suffering a trauma to a joint within the 25 years immediately before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
 - (j) for osteoarthritis of a weight bearing joint of the lower limb, being occupationally required to undertake continuous heavy physical activity for at least 10 years, before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint, and where such continuous heavy physical activity has ceased, the clinical onset of osteoarthritis has

occurred within the 25 years immediately following such activity ;
or

- (k) for osteoarthritis of the wrist, elbow or metacarpophalangeal joint, being occupationally required to use a pneumatic drill, a jackhammer or similar pneumatic tool for at least 10 years before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint; and where such continuous heavy physical activity has ceased, the clinical onset of osteoarthritis has occurred within the 25 years immediately following such activity ; or
- (m) suffering from internal derangement of the knee before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint ;or
- (n) suffering inflammatory joint disease in a joint before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
- (o) suffering from septic arthritis in a joint before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
- (p) suffering an intra-articular fracture of a joint before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
- (q) having a malalignment of a joint before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
- (r) being obese for at least 10 years, within the 25 years immediately before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in either knee joint;
or
- (s) suffering from a depositional joint disease in a joint before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
- (t) suffering from permanent ligamentous instability of a joint before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
- (u) suffering a trauma to a joint within the 25 years immediately before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
- (v) for osteoarthritis of a weight bearing joint of the lower limb, being occupationally required to undertake continuous heavy physical activity for at least 10 years, before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint, and where such continuous heavy physical activity has ceased, the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis has occurred within the 25 years immediately following such activity ; or

- (w) for osteoarthritis of the wrist, elbow or metacarpophalangeal joint, being occupationally required to use a pneumatic drill, a jackhammer or similar pneumatic tool for at least 10 years before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint; and where such continuous heavy physical activity has ceased, the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis has occurred within the 25 years immediately following such activity; or
- (x) suffering from internal derangement of the knee before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint.

Factors that apply only to material contribution or aggravation

- 6. Paragraphs 5(n) to 5(x) apply only to material contribution to, or aggravation of, osteoarthritis where the person's osteoarthritis was suffered or contracted before or during (but not arising out of) the person's relevant service; paragraph 8(1)(e), 9(1)(e) or 70(5)(d) of the Act refers.

Inclusion of Statements of Principles

- 7. In this Statement of Principles if a relevant factor applies and that factor includes an injury or disease in respect of which there is a Statement of Principles then the factors in that last mentioned Statement of Principles apply in accordance with the terms of that Statement of Principles.

Other definitions

- 8. For the purposes of this Statement of Principles:

“being obese” means an increase in body weight by way of fat accumulation beyond an arbitrary limit, and due to a cause specified in the Repatriation Medical Authority's Statement about the causes of “being obese” signed by the Chairman of the Authority on 16 August 1996, attracting ICD code 278.0.

The measurement used to define “being obese” is the Body Mass Index (BMI).

The $BMI = W/H^2$ and where:

W is the person's weight in kilograms and
H is the person's height in metres.

“Being obese” is considered to be present when the BMI is 30 or greater. This definition excludes weight gain not resulting from fat deposition such as gross oedema, peritoneal or pleural effusion, or muscle hypertrophy.

“Being obese” develops when energy intake is in excess of expenditure for a sustained period of time.

For a factor to be included as a cause of “being obese” it must have resulted in a significant weight gain, of the order of a 20% increase in baseline weight, and in association with a BMI of 30 or greater;

“being occupationally required to undertake continuous heavy physical activity” means working in a job requiring continuous and repetitive flexion, extension or twisting of the affected joint, frequent carrying of loads of at least 35 kg, lifting of maximal loads in a twisted or bent position, or exposure to, or engagement in, any combination of these activities on most days;

“death from osteoarthritis” in relation to a person includes death from a terminal event or condition that was contributed to by the person’s osteoarthritis;

“depositional joint disease” means gout, pseudogout, haemochromatosis, Wilson's disease or ochronosis;

“ICD-9-CM code” means a number assigned to a particular kind of injury or disease in the Australian Version of The International Classification of Diseases, 9th revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-9-CM), effective date of 1 July 1996, copyrighted by the National Coding Centre, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney, NSW, and having ISBN 0 642 24447 2;

“inflammatory joint disease” means rheumatoid arthritis, Reiter’s Syndrome, psoriatic arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis (peripheral joints), or arthritis associated with Crohn’s disease or ulcerative colitis;

“internal derangement of the knee” means a chronic disorder of the knee due to (alone or in combination) torn, ruptured or deranged meniscus of the knee, or torn or stretched collateral, cruciate or capsular ligament of the knee, resulting in ongoing or intermittent signs and symptoms such as pain, instability or abnormal mobility of that knee, excluding chondromalacia patellae, congenital discoid meniscus, cysts of the menisci and other degenerative processes such as osteoarthritis, and loose bodies in the knee joint;

“intra-articular fracture” means a fracture involving the articular surface of a joint;

“malalignment” means the presence of significant displacement out of line resulting from the effect of underlying muscle weakness, deformity of other joints, joint dysplasia or disparate leg length;

“permanent ligamentous instability” means continuing or recurring abnormal mobility and instability of a joint which is characterised by the regular recurrence of episodes of pain and/or swelling of that joint;

“trauma to a joint” means a discrete joint injury that causes the development within 24 hours of the injury being sustained, of acute symptoms and signs of pain, swelling, tenderness, and altered mobility or range of movement of that joint. These acute symptoms and signs must last for a period of at least 10 days immediately after the injury occurs;

“relevant service” means:

- (a) eligible war service (other than operational service); or
- (b) defence service (other than hazardous service);

“septic arthritis” means the infection of a joint or joints by an organism, usually although not exclusively bacterial, and resultant inflammation within the involved joint/s;

“terminal event” means the proximate or ultimate cause of death and includes:

- a) pneumonia;
- b) respiratory failure;
- c) cardiac arrest;
- d) circulatory failure; or
- e) cessation of brain function;

“weight bearing joint of the lower limb” means the hip joint, knee joint or ankle joint.

Dated this *Twenty-ninth* day of *June* 1998

The Common Seal of the)
Repatriation Medical Authority)
was affixed to this instrument)
in the presence of)

KEN DONALD
CHAIRMAN