

Revocation and Determination

of

Statement of Principles concerning

OSTEOARTHRISIS

ICD-10-AM CODES: M15, M16, M17, M18, M19

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.42 of 1998 and Instrument No.20 of 1999; and
 - (b) determines in their 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 clinical joint disorder associated with progressive loss of articular cartilage, sclerosis of the underlying bone, proliferation of bone and cartilage at the joint margins, and inflammation of the synovium, as well as a history of pain, impaired function and stiffness, attracting ICD-10-AM code M15, M16, M17, M18 or M19.

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 of the affected joint before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
 - (b) suffering from septic arthritis of the affected joint before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
 - (c) suffering an intra-articular fracture of the affected joint before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
 - (d) for osteoarthritis of a hip, knee or ankle joint, having disordered joint mechanics affecting that 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 the affected joint before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
 - (g) suffering from permanent ligamentous instability of the affected joint before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
 - (h) suffering a trauma to the affected joint within the 25 years immediately before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
 - (j) for osteoarthritis of a hip or knee joint lifting loads of at least 35 kg while weight bearing to a cumulative total of 168 000 kg within any 10 year period, before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint, and where such physical activity has ceased, the clinical onset of osteoarthritis has occurred within the 25 years immediately following such activity; or

- (k) for osteoarthritis of a knee joint, kneeling or squatting for at least one hour each day on more days than not for at least two years before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint, and where such physical activity has ceased, the clinical onset of osteoarthritis has occurred within the 25 years immediately following such activity; or
- (m) for osteoarthritis of an elbow, wrist, or metacarpophalangeal joint, using a hand-held, vibrating, percussive, industrial tool on more days than not for at least 10 years before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint, and where such activity has ceased, the clinical onset of osteoarthritis has occurred within the 25 years immediately following such activity; or
- (n) suffering from internal derangement of a knee before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
- (o) suffering frostbite to the skin overlying the joint before the clinical onset of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
- (p) suffering inflammatory joint disease of the affected joint before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
- (q) suffering from septic arthritis of the affected joint before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
- (r) suffering an intra-articular fracture of the affected joint before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
- (s) for osteoarthritis of a hip, knee or ankle joint, having disordered joint mechanics affecting that joint before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
- (t) being obese for at least 10 years, within the 25 years immediately before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in either knee joint; or
- (u) suffering from a depositional joint disease in the affected joint before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
- (v) suffering from permanent ligamentous instability of the affected joint before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint; or

- (w) suffering a trauma to the affected joint within the 25 years immediately before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
- (x) for osteoarthritis of a hip or knee joint lifting loads of at least 35 kg while weight bearing to a cumulative total of 168 000 kg within any 10 year period, before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint, and where such physical activity has ceased, the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis has occurred within the 25 years immediately following such activity; or
- (y) for osteoarthritis of a knee joint, kneeling or squatting for at least one hour each day on more days than not for at least two years before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint, and where such physical activity has ceased, the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis has occurred within the 25 years immediately following such activity; or
- (z) for osteoarthritis of an elbow, wrist, or metacarpophalangeal joint, using hand-held, vibrating, percussive, industrial tools on more days than not for at least 10 years before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint, and where such activity has ceased, the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis has occurred within the 25 years immediately following such activity; or
- (za) suffering from internal derangement of a knee before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint; or
- (zb) suffering frostbite to the skin overlying the joint before the clinical worsening of osteoarthritis in that joint.

Factors that apply only to material contribution or aggravation

6. Paragraphs **5(p) to 5(zb)** 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 which results in a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or greater.

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

W is the person’s weight in kilograms and

H is the person’s height in metres;

“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;

“disordered joint mechanics” means maldistribution of loading forces on that joint resulting from:

- (a) a rotation or angulation deformity of the long bones of the affected limb;
- (b) a rotation or angulation deformity of the hip, knee or ankle joint of the affected limb;
- (c) necrosis of bone near the affected joint;
- (d) amputation involving either leg; or
- (e) permanent limp involving either leg resulting from pelvic, thoracolumbar spine, long bone or joint pathology;

“frostbite” means a freezing injury to the skin, subcutaneous and deeper tissues as the result of exposure to low environmental temperatures;

“ICD-10-AM code” means a number assigned to a particular kind of injury or disease in The International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10th revision, Australian Modification (ICD-10-AM), Second Edition, effective date of 1 July 2000, copyrighted by the National Centre for Classification in Health, Sydney, NSW, and having ISBN 1 86487 271 3;

“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 a 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;

“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;

“relevant service” means:

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

“septic arthritis” means the bacterial infection of a joint resulting in inflammation within that joint;

“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;

“trauma to the affected joint” means a discrete joint injury that causes the development, within 24 hours of the injury being sustained, of symptoms and signs of pain, and tenderness, and either altered mobility or range of movement of the joint. These symptoms and signs must last for a period of at least ten days following their onset; save for where medical intervention for the trauma to that joint has occurred, where that medical intervention involves either:

- (a) immobilisation of the joint or limb by splinting, sling or similar external agents; or
- (b) injection of corticosteroids or local anaesthetics into that joint; or
- (c) aspiration of that joint; or
- (d) surgery to that joint;

“vibrating, percussive, industrial tool” means a pneumatic or power tool commonly used in an industrial setting which imparts significant vibration and impaction force to the joints of the upper limb and excludes tools weighing less than one kilogram;

“weight bearing” means weight loading the affected joint.

Application

9. This Instrument applies to all matters to which section 120B of the Act applies.

Dated this *Ninth* day of *October* 2001

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

KEN DONALD
CHAIRMAN