

Veteran's Service Officer's Report.

The VA has recently identified additional diseases resulting from Vietnam or Middle East which have been placed in the presumptive disease category. The following is a discussion of the recent VA action. For more information or to discuss a claim see your Veteran's Service Officer.

Proposed Regulation Change Adds Illnesses to List of Diseases
Subject to Presumptive Service Connection for Herbicide Exposure

www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange

A proposed regulation published by VA adds three new illnesses to the list of health problems found to be related to Agent Orange and other herbicide exposures. The regulation follows the October 2009 decision by Secretary of Veterans Affairs Erik K. Shinseki to add three illnesses to the current list of diseases for which service connection for Vietnam veterans is presumed. The illnesses are **B cell leukemias**, such as hairy cell leukemia; **Parkinson's disease**; and **ischemic heart disease**.

The Secretary's decision is based on the latest evidence of an association with widely used herbicides such as Agent Orange during the Vietnam War, as determined in an independent study by the Institute of Medicine. A final regulation will not become effective until after a period for public comment which ends April 26, 2010. The final regulation will be published after consideration of all comments received. Vietnam veterans with these three diseases are encouraged to submit their applications for compensation now so VA can begin development of their claims before the rule becomes final.

Over 80,000 veterans will have their past claims reviewed and may be eligible for retroactive payment, and all who are not currently eligible for enrollment into the VA healthcare system will become eligible. Veterans who served in Vietnam anytime during the period beginning January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975, are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides. The new rule will bring the number of illnesses presumed to be associated with herbicide exposure to 14 and significantly expand the current leukemia definition to include a much broader range of leukemias beyond chronic lymphocytic leukemia previously recognized by VA.

Infectious Diseases to be Added as
Presumptive Disabilities for Gulf War Veterans

www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/

VA is taking steps to make it easier for veterans to obtain disability compensation for certain diseases associated with service in the Persian Gulf War or Afghanistan. Following recommendations made by VA's Gulf War Veterans Illnesses Task Force, VA is publishing a proposed regulation in the *Federal Register* that will establish new presumptions of service connection for nine specific infectious diseases associated with military service in Southwest Asia during the Persian Gulf War, or in Afghanistan on or after September 19, 2001.

The proposed rule includes information about the long-term health effects potentially associated with the nine diseases: **Brucellosis, Campylobacter jejuni, Coxiella burnetii (Q fever), malaria, Mycobacterium tuberculosis, Nontyphoid Salmonella, Shigella, Visceral leishmaniasis and West Nile virus.**

For non-presumptive conditions, a veteran is required to provide medical evidence that can be used to establish an actual connection between military service in Southwest Asia or in Afghanistan, and a specific disease. With the proposed rule, a veteran will only have to show service in Southwest Asia or Afghanistan, and a current diagnosis of one of the nine diseases. Comments on the proposed rule will be accepted over the next 60 days. A final regulation will be published after consideration of all comments received.

Because the Persian Gulf War has not officially been declared ended, veterans serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom are eligible for VA's new presumptions. VA decided to include Afghanistan veterans in these presumptions because the National Academy of Sciences found that the nine diseases are prevalent in that country.