



Australian Government  
Repatriation Medical Authority

## Statement of Principles concerning

# GASTRO-OESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE

## No. 65 of 2013

for the purposes of the

*Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*  
and

*Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*

### Title

1. This Instrument may be cited as Statement of Principles concerning gastro-oesophageal reflux disease No. 65 of 2013.

### Determination

2. The Repatriation Medical Authority under subsection **196B(2)** and **(8)** of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (the VEA):
  - (a) revokes Instrument No. 11 of 2005 concerning gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; and
  - (b) determines in its place this Statement of Principles.

### Kind of injury, disease or death

3.
  - (a) This Statement of Principles is about **gastro-oesophageal reflux disease** and **death from gastro-oesophageal reflux disease**.
  - (b) For the purposes of this Statement of Principles, "**gastro-oesophageal reflux disease**" means a chronic clinical condition involving the retrograde flow of gastro-duodenal contents into the oesophagus together with resultant chronic symptomatic or histological evidence of oesophageal inflammation. This definition excludes Barrett's oesophagus.

- (c) Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease attracts ICD-10-AM code K21.
- (d) In the application of this Statement of Principles, the definition of **"gastro-oesophageal reflux disease"** is that given at paragraph 3(b) above.

#### **Basis for determining the factors**

- 4. The Repatriation Medical Authority is of the view that there is sound medical-scientific evidence that indicates that **gastro-oesophageal reflux disease** and **death from gastro-oesophageal reflux disease** can be related to relevant service rendered by veterans, members of Peacekeeping Forces, or members of the Forces under the VEA, or members under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (the MRCA).

#### **Factors that must be related to service**

- 5. Subject to clause 7, at least one of the factors set out in clause 6 must be related to the relevant service rendered by the person.

#### **Factors**

- 6. The factor that must as a minimum exist before it can be said that a reasonable hypothesis has been raised connecting **gastro-oesophageal reflux disease** or **death from gastro-oesophageal reflux disease** with the circumstances of a person's relevant service is:
  - (a) having a hiatus hernia at the time of the clinical onset of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
  - (b) being overweight at the time of the clinical onset of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
  - (c) smoking at least 1.5 pack-years of cigarettes, or the equivalent thereof in other tobacco products, within the five years before the clinical onset of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
  - (d) consuming an average of at least 300 grams of alcohol per week for at least the 12 months before the clinical onset of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
  - (e) undergoing surgery to the region of the oesophageal hiatus, including oesophageal dilatation, or surgery involving the fundus or body of the stomach, within the three months before the clinical onset of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
  - (f) being treated with a smooth muscle relaxant drug at the time of the clinical onset of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
  - (g) having a disease from the specified list at the time of the clinical onset of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
  - (h) being pregnant at the time of the clinical onset of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
  - (i) having a hiatus hernia at the time of the clinical worsening of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or

- (j) being overweight at the time of the clinical worsening of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
- (k) smoking at least 1.5 pack-years of cigarettes, or the equivalent thereof in other tobacco products, within the five years before the clinical worsening of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
- (l) consuming an average of at least 300 grams of alcohol per week for at least the 12 months before the clinical worsening of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
- (m) undergoing surgery to the region of the oesophageal hiatus, including oesophageal dilatation, or surgery involving the fundus or body of the stomach, within the three months before the clinical worsening of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
- (n) being treated with a smooth muscle relaxant drug at the time of the clinical worsening of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
- (o) having a disease from the specified list at the time of the clinical worsening of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
- (p) being pregnant at the time of the clinical worsening of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
- (q) having a specified psychiatric condition at the time of the clinical worsening of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
- (r) being treated orally with a drug or a drug from a class of drugs from the specified list at the time of the clinical worsening of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease; or
- (s) inability to obtain appropriate clinical management for gastro-oesophageal reflux disease.

**Factors that apply only to material contribution or aggravation**

7. Paragraphs 6(i) to 6(s) apply only to material contribution to, or aggravation of, gastro-oesophageal reflux disease where the person's gastro-oesophageal reflux disease was suffered or contracted before or during (but not arising out of) the person's relevant service.

**Inclusion of Statements of Principles**

8. 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 as in force from time to time.

## Other definitions

9. For the purposes of this Statement of Principles:

**"a disease from the specified list"** means:

- (a) dermatomyositis;
- (b) mixed connective tissue disease;
- (c) polymyositis;
- (d) Sjögren's syndrome;
- (e) systemic lupus erythematosus;
- (f) systemic sclerosis (scleroderma); or
- (g) Zollinger-Ellison syndrome;

**"a drug or a drug from a class of drugs from the specified list"** means:

- (a) alprenolol chloride;
- (b) amoxicillin;
- (c) ascorbic acid;
- (d) bisphosphonates;
- (e) captopril;
- (f) cefotiam hydrochloride;
- (g) chemotherapeutic agents;
- (h) clindamycin;
- (i) cyproterone acetate;
- (j) doxycycline;
- (k) emepronium bromide;
- (l) ferrous sulphate;
- (m) glibenclamide (glyburide);
- (n) glucocorticoids;
- (o) ideocyclin;
- (p) mycophenolate mofetil;
- (q) nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents;
- (r) nifedipine;
- (s) oral contraceptives;
- (t) phenytoin;
- (u) potassium chloride;
- (v) quinidine;
- (w) rifampicin;
- (x) tetracycline;
- (y) verapamil; or
- (z) warfarin;

**"a smooth muscle relaxant drug"** means:

- (a) a benzodiazepine;
- (b) a calcium channel blocker drug;
- (c) a beta-adrenergic receptor agonist;
- (d) a nitrate drug;
- (e) a tricyclic antidepressant;
- (f) an anti-cholinergic drug;
- (g) aminophylline; or
- (h) theophylline;

**"a specified psychiatric condition"** means:

- (a) anxiety disorder;
- (b) depressive disorder; or
- (c) posttraumatic stress disorder;

**"alcohol"** is measured by the alcohol consumption calculations utilising the Australian Standard of ten grams of alcohol per standard alcoholic drink;

**"being overweight"** means an increase in body weight by way of fat accumulation which results in a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 25 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 gastro-oesophageal reflux disease"** in relation to a person includes death from a terminal event or condition that was contributed to by the person's gastro-oesophageal reflux disease;

**"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), Eighth Edition, effective date of 1 July 2013, copyrighted by the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority, and having ISBN 978-1-74128-213-9;

**"pack-years of cigarettes, or the equivalent thereof in other tobacco products"** means a calculation of consumption where one pack-year of cigarettes equals twenty tailor-made cigarettes per day for a period of one calendar year, or 7 300 cigarettes. One tailor-made cigarette approximates one gram of tobacco or one gram of cigar or pipe tobacco by weight. One pack-year of tailor-made cigarettes equates to 7.3 kilograms of smoking tobacco by weight. Tobacco products mean cigarettes, pipe tobacco or cigars, smoked alone or in any combination;

**"relevant service"** means:

- (a) operational service under the VEA;
- (b) peacekeeping service under the VEA;
- (c) hazardous service under the VEA;
- (d) British nuclear test defence service under the VEA;
- (e) warlike service under the MRCA; or
- (f) non-warlike service under the MRCA;

**"Sjögren's syndrome"** means a chronic autoimmune disorder characterised by xerostomia (dry mouth), xerophthalmia (dry eyes) and lymphocytic infiltration of the exocrine glands;

**"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;

**"Zollinger-Ellison syndrome"** means a condition characterised by gastric hypersecretion of acid, ulceration of the upper gastro-intestinal mucosa and usually the presence of a gastrinoma or a diffuse hyperplasia of the gastrin secreting beta cells of the pancreas.

**Application**

10. This Instrument applies to all matters to which section 120A of the VEA or section 338 of the MRCA applies.

**Date of effect**

11. This Instrument takes effect from 4 September 2013.

Dated this *twenty-sixth* day of *August* 2013

The Common Seal of the  
Repatriation Medical Authority  
was affixed to this instrument  
at the direction of:

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PROFESSOR NICHOLAS SAUNDERS AO  
CHAIRPERSON