



**Department of  
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# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 7, 2012

## **VA Seeks to Expand TBI Benefits**

### *Proposes Adding 5 Diagnosable Illnesses Secondary to Service-Connected TBI*

WASHINGTON— The Department of Veterans Affairs is publishing a proposed regulation in the Federal Register that would change its rules to add five diagnosable illnesses which are secondary to service-connected Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

“We must always decide Veterans’ disability claims based on the best science available, and we will,” Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki said. “Veterans who endure health problems deserve timely decisions based on solid evidence that ensure they receive benefits earned through their service to the country.”

VA proposes to add a new subsection to its adjudication regulation by revising 38 CFR 3.310 to state that if a Veteran who has a service-connected TBI also has one of the five illnesses, then the illness will be considered service connected as secondary to the TBI.

Service connection under the proposed rule depends in part upon the severity of the TBI (mild, moderate, or severe) and the period of time between the injury and onset of the secondary illness. However, the proposed rule also clarifies that it does not preclude a Veteran from establishing direct service connection even if those time and severity standards are not met. It also defines the terms mild, moderate, and severe, consistent with Department of Defense (DoD) guidelines.

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.

VA’s decision is based on a report by the National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine (IOM), “Gulf War and Health, Volume 7: Long-Term Consequences of TBI.” In its report, the IOM’s Committee on Gulf War and Health concluded that “sufficient evidence of a causal relationship” - the IOM’s highest evidentiary standard - existed between moderate or severe levels of TBI and diagnosed unprovoked seizures. The IOM found “sufficient evidence of an association” between moderate or severe levels of TBI and Parkinsonism; dementias (which

VA understands to include presenile dementia of the Alzheimer type and post-traumatic dementia); depression (which also was associated with mild TBI); and diseases of hormone deficiency that may result from hypothalamo-pituitary changes.

Specific information about the Defense and Veteran Brain Injury Center is available at <http://www.dvbic.org/>. Information about Gulf War and VA's services and programs are available at: [http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/hazardous\\_exposures.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/hazardous_exposures.asp).

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