



Ministry of Defence

Defence Business Services
DBS Secretariat
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Ref: FOI2023/04492

DBSRES-Secretariat@mod.gov.uk

3 May 2023

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 4 April 2023 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD), seeking the following information:

"Please may I have a copy of the guidelines that Veterans UK Medical Advisers use in the Assessment of psychiatric disorders such as PTSD & Anxiety with Depression when looking at War Pensioner claims."

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the MOD and I can confirm all information in scope of your request is held.

Assessments of both physical and mental conditions are evidence-based. Veterans UK Medical Advisers (MAs) utilise a wide range of medical resources to aid in their decision making. Decisions are made in accordance with the legislation, contemporary medical understanding and the case-specific facts.

To support decision making, MAs are provided with Synopses of Causation and Medical Appendices covering a range of injuries and disorders often seen in Service personnel and veterans. Reports from the Independent Medical Expert Group (IMEG) are used as a resource to inform medical decisions. The IMEG provides evidence comprising independent, published, peer-reviewed scientific and medical literature.

The recorded information you have requested falls entirely within the scope of an absolute exemption under Section 21 of the FOIA as it is reasonably accessible by other means. Section 21 is an absolute exemption, there is no requirement to consider the public interest in making the decision to withhold the information.

Under Section 16 (Advice and Assistance) you may be interested to know that the Synopses of Causation can be viewed at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-compensation-and-occupational-pension-schemes-synopses-of-causation>

Information relating to the specific disorders you have referenced can be found at the links below:

Depressive Disorder: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/synopsis-of-causation-depressive-disorder>

Generalised Anxiety Disorder: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/synopsis-of-causation-generalised-anxiety-disorder>

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/synopsis-of-causation-post-traumatic-stress-disorder>

You may also wish to know that when assessing claims under the War Pension Scheme, all MAs utilise The Naval, Military and Air Forces Etc. (Disablement and Death) Service Pensions Order 2006. This can be accessed at the following link:

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2006/606/contents

MAs also have OpenAthens accounts which allows for access to a wealth of knowledge resources to support evidence-based decision making and continuing professional development. The OpenAthens account provides an extensive range of quality, trusted, evidence-based resources for the MAs to utilise. This includes but is not limited to e-books, journals, study aids, databases of clinical management, the NHS Knowledge and Library Hub and the national clinical decision support tool, along with BMJ Best Practice guidance.

The MAs are aware of, and will sometimes refer to, NICE (National Institute for health and Care Excellence) clinical guidelines, which are recommendations on how healthcare and other professionals should care for people with specific conditions. NICE recommendations are based on the best available evidence and can cover any aspect of a condition. Further information about NICE clinical guidelines can be found at the following link:

www.nice.org.uk/process/pmg6/resources/how-nice-clinical-guidelines-are-developed-an-overview-for-stakeholders-the-public-and-the-nhs-2549708893/chapter/nice-clinical-guidelines

The following NICE links are of particular note in relation to consideration of mental health conditions:

PTSD: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/NG116

Depression in adults: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng222

Generalised Anxiety Disorder and Panic Disorder in adults: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG113

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

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Defence Business Services Secretariat

