



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF  
FAMILY PHYSICIANS  
STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA

July 23, 2012

Dear Colleagues,

Many of you have probably read in the mainstream media about a backlog at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in processing applications for disability benefits — a backlog now totaling 558,000 claims. These delays are due in part to a generation of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with more complex claims, and a decision two years ago to expand compensation for Agent Orange-related illnesses. Claims also increase in a poor economy.

The White House has asked the AAFP to increase awareness of this issue among our members, and encourage the nation's private physicians to help in filling out Disability Benefit Questionnaires (DBQs) for their patients who are veterans.

These DBQs solicit the medical information necessary to evaluate veterans' medical conditions. The VA has developed more than 70 DBQs, specific to various conditions such as hearing loss or arthritis that veterans can take to private physicians to fill out. Completed DBQs will help speed the processing of veterans' disability compensation and pension claims. According to the VA, the streamlined forms use check boxes and standardized language so that the disability rating can be made accurately and quickly. DBQs can be viewed on the VA website at <http://benefits.va.gov/disabilityexams>

All physicians with active medical licenses who are treating veterans can complete the DBQs. The VA will not reimburse physicians for helping veterans complete their DBQs — veterans are responsible for any related costs.

I encourage all family physicians to seek out their patients who are veterans and volunteer to help them fill out the appropriate DBQs. This will help the VA determine the appropriate benefits to these national heroes and is one way we can honor their service. Thank you in advance.

Regards,

Glen R. Stream, MD, MBI, FAAFP  
AAFP President

[www.aafp.org](http://www.aafp.org)

**President**  
Glen Stream, MD  
Spokane, WA

**President-elect**  
Jeffrey J. Cain, MD  
Denver, CO

**Board Chair**  
Roland A. Goertz, MD  
Waco, TX

**Directors**  
Reid Blackwelder, MD, Kingsport, TN  
Conrad L. Flick, MD, Raleigh, NC  
Laura Knobel, MD, Walpole, MA  
Barbara Doty, MD, Wasilla, AK  
Richard Madden, Jr., MD, Belen, NM  
Robert Wergin, MD, Milford, NE

Julie K. Wood, MD, Lee's Summit, MO  
Wanda D. Filer, MD, York, PA  
Daniel R. Spogen, MD, Reno, NV  
Robyn Liu, MD, (New Physician Member), Portland, OR  
Brent Smith, MD, (Resident Member), Brandon, MS  
Jessica Johnson (Student Member), Newington, CT

**Speaker**  
John S. Meigs, Jr., MD  
Brent, AL

**Vice Speaker**  
Javette C. Orgain, MD  
Chicago, IL

**Executive Vice President**  
Douglas E. Henley, MD  
Leawood, KS