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If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?

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1) Deny or Ignore Everything

This is the most commonly used dirty trick in the book. Many government and private agencies use this as their first line defense against any claim. They will either immediately deny your claim or they will ignore it. If they choose to ignore it, they will not acknowledge that they received your claim. If you try to find out if they did or not, they will make up excuses that will cause you to wait, tell you to call back, send you on an endless goose chase from one department to another, or they will repeatedly tell you to submit it over and over again.

This is called “kicking the can down the road”. It serves many purposes. The main purpose is to discourage you and make you give up or distract you and cause you to forget or miss deadlines for filing documents or appeals or whatever you need to do. If you file the same claim again it creates a new disability compensation claim date cheating you out of your back pay.

Another reason is that it distances them from the issues. This works to their advantage. Let me explain. Let’s say you filed for a back condition and the VA kicks the issue down the road for several years and in the meantime you develop some other medical conditions. Now, the VA doctors can begin to try to link your back pain to some non-service connected medical condition. Don’t laugh because they can get very creative when it comes to this trick.

It also gives them time to confuse the issues. Suddenly, your medical records will be filled with fabricated evidence to support the VA’s position. They will twist everything you say to suit this purpose. For instance, the doctors ask you if your back hurts when you lift heavy things and naturally you tell them YES. Here’s what will be documented on your medical records:” Veteran complains of back pain from doing heavy lifting at home.” The VA just created a new cause for your back pain and it’s not service-connected. Or even better, “Veteran injured back at home today while lifting heavy object.” See how that works? They just made a chronic condition a NEW medical condition.

On the other hand, if the VA injured you and you file an 11.51 disability claim, they do the opposite. For example, The VA tore my rotator cuff by surprising me with heavy sandbags for an x-ray without giving me a chance to refuse. Immediately, this torn rotator cuff became an old injury, it was suddenly labeled “chronic shoulder pain” and they attempted to fabricate a history of shoulder problems. Old injuries are new and new injuries are old, which brings me to dirty trick number two.

2) False Medical Records

Most veterans don't have copies of their military or VA medical records and depend on the VA to furnish them. Good luck with that; because the VA will both lie and say they don't have the records or just deliberately destroy them. There goes your evidence.

The Houston VA Regional Office told me for almost three years that they never received my Notice of Disagreement until I went down to the office in person and demanded to see my C-file and there it was on the very top of the file with their time stamp dated three years ago.

That's why you should get copies and read your medical records every time you go to the VA because if you don't they will fabricate false medical records for you. They do it anyway, all the time. The VA doctors and nurses will quote you as saying things that are false. Their favorite misquote is pain. My VA records state that I tell the doctors I have no pain just about every time I go there, which is a bold faced LIE. Your back could be broken with bones sticking out and they will write on your medical records that your back appears to be normal with no visible sign of distress and patient denies back pain.

Don't think for one minute that VA doctors are your friend. They know that their job is to cover up, hide and distort medical evidence in your VA medical records and VA C-file if it's connected to a disputed VA claim. And, don't think the medical doctors are the only ones who do this. Your x-ray will be read wrong by the Radiologists. They won't see that broken bone or compressed disk and if they acknowledge it at all, it will be coded in long Latin medical terms that you will have to look up in a medical dictionary to figure out what they're trying to say and don't count on VA medical doctors to explain it because they will tell you everything is NORMAL. Don't believe me, just file a FTCA (federal torts claim act) and watch your medical records disappear like magic and new records appear debunking your claim

Ever wonder how the VA gets away with these lies? Did you know that VA doctors can legally withhold medical information from you? That's a fact. The practice of withholding pertinent medical information from patients in the belief that disclosure is medically contraindicated is known as "therapeutic privilege." That means all the doctor has to do is think that you might be upset if you knew the truth, so he or she is not going to tell you. How convenient for them.

The VA doctors will try to change dates, confuse facts, and create new reports with false information claiming they are backed up by prior records and reports. Perfect example is what the VA Radiologists did to my kidney X-rays and ultrasound.

I had an ultrasound in 2013 that showed no sign of damage to my kidneys. The 2013 ultrasound stated that there was evidence that I had passed a kidney stone because it left a small distorted area inside one of my ureters.

Then, in 2014 a VA dentist soaked my partials in poison that you clean countertops with and put them in my mouth. The corrosive poison caused burns in my mouth, throat and intestinal tract and resulted in atrophy of both of my kidney cortex. Want to know what my VA medical records say about it “Veteran’s current X-rays unchanged from 2013 ultrasound that shows atrophy of kidneys.” That’s a creative lie. The small distorted area now becomes atrophy and now applies to both kidneys. They tried to link the new injury to an old ultrasound. Nice try but no cigar.

VA doctors love to use terms that are ambiguous. For instance, my thyroid levels were all off the chart. The VA doctor recorded in my medical records that the results of my thyroid levels were “low normal”, “high normal”, “moderately high normal” “moderately low normal” and my favorite doublespeak catch all VA medical term “cumulatively normal”. So, what this VA doctor did was take all the abnormal results, add them together and then divide by the number of tests and presto; it’s now “cumulatively normal.”

Here’s another example: On the report for my Compensation exam for the torn rotator cuff injury caused by Michael Debakey Medical Center, the doctor wrote that I injured myself “lifting weights”. Out of nowhere, now I’m a 62 year old disabled weight lifter. That’s another creative lie / half truth meant to confuse the issues. I can see this doctor defending her statement in Court. “Well, your Honor, the sandbags were weights and she was injured by lifting them so what part of that is a lie? “

3) Research

This is a dirty trick few veterans know about or even realize is happening to them. In the military you know you are government property because they just come out and tell you; but what they don’t tell you is that they have a legal right to experiment on you without your knowledge using untested drugs and treatments. Most veterans just give their permission by signing everything put in front of them without reading it. Read it sometime and you’ll see you gave away every human right you ever thought you had in exchange for treatment at a VA facility.

I go to the VA Hospital in Houston, Texas. It is not called the VA Hospital. It is named Michael Debakey Medical Center. It is a TEACHING hospital and is owned by Baylor College of Medicine. I am no more than a guinea pig or laboratory rat to the students, residents and interns that staff this hell hole. It is literally run by students, residents and interns who have little experience and no one is teaching them. The head of the department is in his office doing paperwork or not there at all.

I would say that some trainees learn by trial and error, but since they don't know what they did wrong, they can never learn the right way to do it. They are overseen by whoever has been there the longest. It's the blind leading the blind. They staff the entire hospital almost exclusively with these pimple faced inexperienced adolescents. There are very few real doctors with real life experience. Maybe you get someone who actually knows what they're doing and maybe not. It's Russian roulette with a loaded weapon. That's not the way veteran's healthcare should be.

Why do you think your VA medical care is free? Why do you think they force veterans to go to VA doctors and VA facilities? They want to experiment on you. On the Hospital complex campus in Houston, the Research buildings are almost as big as the Hospital. Where do you think the VA Hospitals get their federal and state funding? Where do you think they get all that scientific data, medical literature and medical statistics? It's from medical Research. The VA advertises that their facilities are on the "cutting edge" of medical science with the latest in drug therapy, new and improved treatments and surgical procedures. Its cutting edge all right and you're the one getting all those new and untested drugs and medical treatments. Five or ten years down the road you or your family will be answering one of those television attorney commercials that say "Did you or someone you love die from this surgical procedure, implant, medication or treatment?" This leads into dirty trick number four.

4) The VA Profits From Your Death

Pretend you're a homicide detective working a murder case. You're going to make a list of suspects consisting of who had motive and opportunity. Well, the VA is at the top of the list because the VA has both. Their motive is that they save money if you're dead because your VA pension, VA Disability Compensation and all monthly and yearly VA benefits die with you. The VA definitely has opportunity because they have complete control over everything aspect of your health thru their VA medical care. They can give you the wrong medicine or treatment, wrong surgery, overdose you or just neglect you to death by doing absolutely nothing, like the secret waiting list for VA appointments that killed thousands of veterans. The VA saved a lot of money with that dirty trick.

You see, that's why they staff their VA hospitals, Clinics and medical facilities with unskilled and inexperienced students, interns and residents; they know that mistakes will be made and veterans will die. The VA's only job is to cover it up and blame it on something else and that's way too easy because they control your medical records. The VA can make your medical records document anything they want. You disobeyed doctor's orders not to get out of bed and fell down a flight of stairs. They can say anything. Who's going to dispute it? Not you. Not your family, unless they actually witnessed the injury or death and the chances of that happening are slim and none.

Remember this, I talk from experience. I once spent three days in the Houston VA Hospital and went to check out and the nurses at the desk didn't know there was a patient in my room. I told them "Yeah, I know you didn't know because I didn't see a nurse for three days." But my medical records stated that they checked on me every two hours and everything was fine. What made me laugh was that my husband had spent the night there in my room with me for two nights and that's against the rules.

The few VA doctors that are actually experienced are either tucked away in an office somewhere and don't see patients or have little experience themselves and probably graduated from one of the many Baylor Colleges. Nurses call their graduates "Baylor Butchers". Worse than that, the rest of the staff doctors work at the VA because they couldn't make it in private practice and civilian hospitals and clinics won't hire them. Most staff VA doctors are foreigners from other countries with no credentials except a diploma. It's really sad. I'm talking in general, of course. I'm sure there are a few good VA doctors out there, but they are too few to make a difference. Where were all the good VA doctors when the veterans on the secret waiting lists were dying? Answer me that?

5) Divide and Conquer

When I came back from Afghanistan in December 2007 I was disabled. I knew it and my unit, the 160th Military Police knew it too, but they tried their best to cover it up. I won't go into detail but suffice it to say I had multiple medical issues that my unit military doctors did not, could not or would not diagnose or document. As a direct result of that, I had to try to figure out myself what to claim on my VA disability Compensation Claim.

My medical conditions had to be in my military medical records because I don't have x-ray vision and could not run the medical and laboratory tests I needed for diagnosis, so I settled on 25 known medical conditions. I know what you're saying. Wow. No wonder you had so much problems. True, but you don't understand. If I didn't claim them at that time, and claimed them later, I would lose out on my back pay.

The VA disability compensation program is designed that way for that exact reason. They want you to wait to claim medical conditions because it saves them money. But it doesn't really matter because even if you had two medical claims, they can divide it by denying one and granting the other, thereby forcing you to appeal or give you a partial decision on one issue and reserve the other issue so they can "kick the can down the road." See, VA dirty trick number One.

This “Divide and Conquer” technique serves many purposes. The main purpose is that this dirty trick allows the VA to generate a perpetual ‘backlog’ of disability claims which means more federal funding for them. The VA created this “hamster wheel” to keep veteran’s compensation claims forever at your local VA Regional Office, which leads me to VA dirty trick number six.

6) The Hamster Wheel

The local VA Regional Offices deliberately deny claims so they can be appealed, we already know this, but what you may not know is that they do this by making “vague” and “unsupported” decisions so that when it is appealed and goes to the Board of Veteran Appeals, it is certain to be REMANDED (sent back to them). This is done deliberately.

Example: My clothing allowance claim was for forearm crutches for my service-connected Fibromyalgia/Traumatic Brain Injury. When the Houston VA Regional Office denied it, they wrote that it was denied because my medical records stated my forearm crutches were for a non-service connected back condition. That is a deliberate lie and they know it and I know it, but now I have to appeal it to the Board of Veteran Appeals and prove it is a lie. It was done on purpose to put me on the Hamster Wheel.

Putting a veteran’s claim on this VA created Hamster Wheel allows the local VA Regional Offices to sit on your claim for another three or four years and starts the entire process all over again just as if you filed a brand new claim. No final decision. Now you have to wait for more appointments for more tests, more doctor visits, more x-rays, then wait for another decision, then file another Notice of Disagreement and wait for another Statement of the Case and appeal it and then wait for it to be certified back to the Board of Veteran Appeals. The VA motto which should be on every Department of Veteran Affairs document as their letterhead “***Delay and Deny till the Day they Die***”.

Sandra Hale, Retired Nurse, Combat Veteran