

Retiree Corner:

Ischemic Heart Disease

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The Department of Veterans Affairs recently added three diseases to the list of diseases related to Agent Orange exposure. The three are: Parkinson's Disease; Hairy Cell Leukemia; and Ischemic Heart Disease. Of the three, the most common to affect men is Ischemic Heart Disease.

MedlinePlus at the National Institute of Health web site (<http://www.nih.gov>) describes it as follows:

“Ischemic cardiomyopathy results when the arteries that bring blood and oxygen to the heart are blocked. There may be a buildup of cholesterol and other substances, called plaque, in the arteries that bring oxygen to heart muscle tissue. Over time, the heart muscle does not work well, and it is more difficult for the heart to fill and release blood.

“Ischemic cardiomyopathy is a common cause of congestive heart failure. Patients with this condition may at one time have had a heart attack, angina, or unstable angina. A few patients may not have noticed any previous symptoms.

“Ischemic cardiomyopathy is the most common type of cardiomyopathy in the United States. It affects approximately 1 out of 100 people, most often middle-aged to elderly men.”

If you are a veteran who served in Vietnam and have been diagnosed with Angina, or have experienced a heart attack, and either or both of these is recorded in any of your medical records, military or civilian, following your Vietnam service, you are eligible to file a claim with the VA for disability compensation. Claims can be submitted and will be held by the VA until legislation is approved, probably in early Spring of 2010.