The **Pilot/AME**
Relationship

Introduction

Professionalism, honesty and trust are the building blocks of a good working relationship between an aeromedical examiner (AME) and a pilot. This does not happen overnight. It requires work from both parties.

Your AME shares the same aim as you: to keep you healthy,and flying safely. An ongoing relationship between you, the pilot, and your AME provides a firm basis for building up trust, enabling health promotion and facilitating better communication both during, and between, examinations. Most medical problems arise between medicals. The medical itself helps to identify, and thus prevent such problems.

AMEs and pilots together should foster a culture where disclosure by the pilot of potentially career threatening medical problems is likely. When it exists, the pilot can expect a supportive response to their problems and then both can work together towards a shared goal of a long and safe career in aviation.

What you can expect from your Aviation Medical Examiner (AME)

Your AME is a doctor and should possess a higher qualification in Aerospace Medicine, be up to date with medical requirements, and have access to specialist support where this is required.

Your AME needs to understand both your life and social circumstances and nature of your employment as a pilot, so expect questions about your personal and family life, as well as your job. An understanding of your work pattern/rosters and employment contractual situation can be very important.

If you identify any areas that you would like further support with as a result of such discussion, your AME can recommend various ways to address them outside of the medical, in order to prevent them becoming an issue that could impact your fitness to fly in the future. This might include Peer Support Programmes, specialised counseling, or support from a professional association. Anything that does not directly impact your fitness to fly will remain confidential between you and your AME.

Your AME:

- should give adequate time for your appointment and practice from appropriate, and properly equipped, premises.

- should treat you with respect, and maintain the confidentiality of your medical information.

- should obtain written consent for your examination.

- will expect you to answer both written and verbal questions, honestly and fully, and not omit any information.

- should respond to any concerns or questions you may have concerning your medical history, or the various clinical tests during your medical.

During the medical:

- you should feel free to ask about any examination or test being performed. For example 'What is the reason for this part of the examination?'

- your AME will explain the medical certificate, and any limitations applied, and your obligation to notify any changes to your health status between medical examinations.

- your AME may recommend further health promotion actions, such as losing weight, giving up smoking, or other lifestyle changes that promote good psychosocial wellbeing.

If you are refused a medical certificate, a clear explanation of the reasons should be given to you, and what further actions are needed to re-gain certification. Your rights of appeal against the decision and access to a secondary review must be made clear.

What an AME should know about the pilot

It is important for you to know that flight safety and a long, healthy and fulfilling career are the number one and two top priorities for a professional pilot.

Commercial Aviation covers a wide spectrum of activities, from single pilot rotary operations such as an Air Ambulance, through to large, multi-crew commercial airliners carrying hundreds of passengers. It is very important to enquire about the detail of the pilot's role and be aware of the different stresses and other health risks that might arise.

Up to date knowledge of the current issues in aviation, for example (but not only) different employment contract forms, fatigue and flight time limitations, are likely to enhance your understanding of the pilot's work environment.

It is important to know the pilot's nature of employment, particularly 'no fly, no pay' (zero-hours contracts) or other types of so-called 'atypical' contracts (self-employment, temporary agency work, pay-to-fly schemes, etc.).

You should understand the social context of the pilot's job. For example, family commitments, life stresses, distance from base and frequency of base changes, career status/level of seniority. Anything that does not directly impact the pilot's fitness to fly shall remain confidential between you and the pilot.

Be attentive to these matters and encourage the pilot to be open about them, particularly as it can easily be perceived by the pilot as 'not being a relevant part of the medical'.

Before starting the medical check:

- you should know: is the pilot at ease about the medical examination?

- you have made a positive identification of the pilot from photographic ID (e.g. passport), you know the pilot's State of Licence issue (SOLI), and have seen the pilot's licence and last medical certificate.

- you know whether the pilot is attending by choice (e.g. after recommendation) or not (e.g. company medical service).

- it should be clear to you what type of medical the pilot needs, and what tests are required.

- is there any risk of conflict of interest (e.g. airline medical doctor, a friend, or a relative)?

A copy of a pilot's roster can be valuable in the understanding of the day to day challenges of the pilot's job.

Don't assume that the pilot understands the reason behind all the questions, examination or tests being performed. Be open about giving explanations.

Does the pilot have faith in your expertise, and trust in your judgment? If so, how do you know? If not, why not? And how can you help to build such faith and trust?

Who is the pilot's employer and how would they respond to a request for Peer Support for the pilot. Does a Peer Support Programme exist in the company or in your country?

How will the pilot's employer respond to a period of 'temporarily unfit'?