Veterans Review and Appeal Board

Representative:	Maurice Bastarache, BPA
Decision number:	100005904337
Decision type:	Entitlement Review
Location of Hearing:	Toronto, ON
Hearing Date:	15 April 2026

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The Entitlement Review Panel decides:

KERATOCONUS RIGHT EYE

No entitlement granted for service in a Special Duty Service (Iran/Iraq).
Section 45, *Veterans Well-being Act*

No entitlement granted for Regular Force service in the Canadian Armed Forces.
Section 45, *Veterans Well-being Act*

Panel Members: D.W.A. Duggins
Lloyd D. Hogan

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D.W.A. Duggins

DECISION

The Panel denies pain and suffering compensation for the condition of Keratoconus Right Eye under Section 45 of the *Veterans Well-being Act*.

OVERVIEW

The Applicant enrolled in the Canadian Armed Forces on 25 January 2007, and continues to serve in the Regular Force. The Applicant applied for pain and suffering compensation due to their Keratoconus Right Eye on 19 January 2024. Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) denied the application on 6 May 2025 in a Disability Benefits Decision.

The Applicant seeks a review of this decision.

ANALYSIS

In determining whether entitlement will be granted, the Panel must ask three questions for which there must be an affirmative answer to all three:

1. Is there a valid, existing diagnosis of the claimed condition?
2. Does the claimed condition constitute a permanent disability?
3. Was the claimed condition caused, aggravated or contributed to by service?

A ‘no’ to any of these questions means that the Applicant is not entitled.

The diagnosis of the Applicant’s claimed condition is found in an Ophthalmological Consultation Report, dated 18 December 2023. As this condition continues to persist, the Panel finds that it is a permanent disability. The remaining question to be determined is whether a service relationship can be established for the claimed condition.

The Applicant’s Nurse Practitioner submitted an opinion for the purposes of this review. At first glance, that medical opinion is strongly supportive of the causes of Keratoconus identified by the Applicant. Under normal circumstances, it would have provided sufficient substantiation to conclude there was a service connection; allowing the Panel to grant entitlement. However, for the reasons below, the Panel has concluded that it is not credible and cannot rely upon it. This is the only medical evidence supporting a connection between the claimed condition and service. Without this medical opinion, the Panel cannot conclude that there is a service connection with the claimed condition and entitlement must be denied.

In reviewing the cited references in the medical opinion, it has become clear that this clinician used Artificial Intelligence (AI) in generating their opinion and references. Equally, it is evident that they did not check the sources which formed the basis of their opinion. Three of those references were:

- Kiely, P. M., & Horton, P. (2021). Environmental and occupational eye disease. Clinical and Experimental Optometry, 104(3), 301–309. https://doi.org/10.1111/cxo.13097
- Wang, Y., Jin, Y., & Jin, H. (2018). The role of environmental factors in keratoconus: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science, 59(12), 5269–5276. https://doi.org/10.1167/iovs.18-24706
- Veterans Affairs Canada. (2023). Entitlement Eligibility Guidelines – Eye Conditions. https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-vac/policy/document/1413

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Perhaps most notable is the Veterans Affairs Canada Entitlement Eligibility Guideline – Eye Conditions (EEG). There is no such EEG. Rather, it appears that the AI "hallucinated" a Government of Canada policy that would be supportive of the opinion.

Similarly, the Panel followed the provided links and has checked the two cited journals by issue, date and page number as indicated in the citation provided. Additionally, the Panel searched these journals by author and more generally for the title of the articles. These articles could not be found in these journals – or anywhere else. Moreover, the Panel could not find supportive scientific articles for the majority of the medical conclusions in the opinion. As such, it would appear that the substance of the opinion itself was also generated by AI. That AI-generated information was false.

The Panel finds that this medical opinion is not credible.

The Nurse Practitioner is a member of the […] College of Nursing ([..]CN). The […]CN has cautioned its members about the risks of relying on AI and on misinformation. With respect to misinformation, the […]CN stated[1]:

> . . . .
>
> Misinformation and disinformation can have serious consequences for public health and safety. The public and clients often trust and rely on health professionals, such as nurses, to provide accurate, reliable, and evidence-informed information so they can make important decisions about their health and wellbeing (Nan et al., 2022) . . . .

In a Fact Sheet on AI in Nursing, the […]CN explains[2]:

> . . . .
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> It is important to consider the evidence that supports the AI tool. As per standard 2, indicator 2.6 of the Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses, "the nurse uses credible research findings and applies evidence-informed practices". Nurses must be able to explain how the AI technology or tool is evidence-informed and has sufficient quality controls. . . .

On its face, it would appear that the Nurse Practitioner is in breach of their Standards of Practice.

As a result of this breach, the Panel is left with no credible medical evidence upon which to conclude that there is a service relationship.

CONCLUSION

The Panel finds that the Applicant's claimed condition of Keratoconus Right Eye was not incurred during, nor is it attributable to, service in Special Duty Area (Iran/Iraq) under Section 45 of the *Veterans Well-being Act*.

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The Panel also finds that the Applicant's claimed condition of Keratoconus Right Eye did not arise out of service in the Regular Force under Section 45 of the *Veterans Well-being Act.*

Applicable Statutes:

Veterans Well-being Act, [S.C. 2005, c.21.]

Section 45
Section 51

Veterans Review and Appeal Board Act, [S.C. 1987, c. 25, s. 1; R.S.C. 1985, c. 20 (3rd Supp.), s. 1; S.C. 1994-95, c. 18, s. 1; SI/95-108.]

Section 3
Section 25
Section 39

Exhibits:

ER-Ex-S1: letter dated 4 July 2025 written by Holli Leblanc, Nurse Practitioner (two pages)

ER-Ex-S2: statement (undated) written by the Applicant (four pages)

APPEAL RIGHTS

If you are dissatisfied with this decision, you may appeal it to an Appeal Panel of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, which may affirm, vary or reverse the decision.

In pursuing this right of appeal, you may be represented, free of charge, by the Bureau of Pensions Advocates or a service bureau of a veterans' organization or at your expense by any other representative.

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[1] New Brunswick College of Nursing, https://cnnb-opinb.ca/media/documents/NANB-FactSheet-MisinformationDisinformation-Apr-23-Jun-24-E_1.pdf
[1] New Brunswick College of Nursing, https://nanb.nb.ca/media/documents/NANB-FactSheet-ArtificalIntelligence-Jun-24-Feb-25-E_1.pdf

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