



M E S O T H E L I O M A S U P P O R T O V E R V I E W

No one should have to battle mesothelioma on their own. Anyone who has been diagnosed with this disease benefits from a large support network made up of family, friends, doctors, nurses, and others who truly care about the patient. Additional help from a cancer support group or social security disability benefits may also provide comfort to mesothelioma patients and their loved ones.

Compassionate Allowances and Mesothelioma

Through a new Social Security program titled “Compassionate Allowances,” mesothelioma patients are able to receive awards in an expedited fashion. The program is designed to quickly provide compensation to patients with serious medical conditions who meet certain disability standards.

Patients with pleural or peritoneal mesothelioma qualify for Compassionate Allowances along with a list of 48 other conditions (totaling 25 rare diseases and 25 cancers) selected for the initial rollout of the program.

Receiving Your Benefits

A patient with peritoneal or pleural mesothelioma can likely receive their Social Security benefits quickly by filing a disability claim. A claim may be filed on the phone by calling the Social Security office or online by visiting www.socialsecurity.gov. A claim may be processed more quickly if completed over the phone. Once a claim is filed and the Social Security office has verified that a claimant has a terminal illness and qualifies for expedited payments, an appointment will be set up at the claimant’s local Social Security office within three days. From there, the claim is processed and payments are generally issued on the first of the month.

Compassionate Allowances Background

Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security announced the commencement of Compassionate Allowances October 27, 2008 in an effort to accelerate the processing of disability claims for Social Security applicants facing severe conditions.

The Social Security Administration received information from medical experts about cancers and rare diseases and worked with the National Institutes of Health to compile the list of 50 conditions eligible for Compassionate Allowances.

When the program is fully implemented and combined with Social Security’s Quick Disability Determination process, the system could resolve 6 to 9 percent of disability claims that affect as much as a quarter million people, in an average of six to eight days.

Dealing with Symptoms and Side Effects

The first hurdle a mesothelioma victim often encounters is difficulty in dealing with symptoms of the disease. These symptoms, which can be very debilitating, compromise quality of life and can make it difficult to carry on with normal activities. Similarly, dealing with the side effects of treatments such as surgery, radiation and chemotherapy can be life-changing. Though the treatments are certainly designed to help the patient battle the disease, they can weaken the body and the spirit.

Pain management can be difficult for mesothelioma sufferers as well, but keeping pain under control is essential to maintaining quality of life. Doctors and other healthcare providers will offer suggestions such as medications and other therapies that will lessen pain.