



Medical Review Panel (MRP) Charter (Update 2023)

1. **Introduction.** The Medical Review Panel (MRP) is an independent team of physicians and others who provide consultation and recommendations to the Office of Polar Programs (OPP) Safety and Occupational Health (SOH) on medical and health care concerns. The areas of review are broad, and are often suggested by the Office of Polar Programs SOH Senior Advisor for Safety and Occupational Health (SOH). The MRP, while remaining independent, is an ongoing integral panel that provides assistance to SOH. The MRP makes recommendations, and then SOH reviews the recommendations and determined and documents the path forward. The MRP is involved in both the Arctic and Antarctic programs.
2. **Goal.** The overall goal of the MRP is to provide consultation and other assistance to SOH/OPP, often in the form of specific medical recommendations. The focus is medical and public health concerns, and through this, the MRP contributes to the health and safety of the OPP Antarctic and Arctic program stakeholders.
3. **Authority of the Medical Review Panel.** OPP exerts management authority with respect to the operation and oversight of the medical program. OPP executes its medical responsibilities in large part through management of contracted services in both polar regions. OPP through SOH convenes a Medical Review Panel (MRP) to advise SOH/OPP in its management of the medical program. As an intragovernmental committee composed exclusively of full or permanent part-time officers or employees of the Federal government, the MRP is exempted from the Federal Advisory Committee (FACA). The MRP reports to the OPP Senior Advisor for Safety and Occupational Health.
 - a. **Duties.** The MRP may be asked to review OPP's existing medical activities or planned changes and make recommendations to modify procedures, guidelines, and administration of those activities on the bases of its professional judgement and experience, while considering the research, operations, and risk involved. For example, the MRP may be asked to examine and provide recommendations on:
 - i. **Data Collection-** to identify trends and opportunities as well as inform decision-making (e.g. data on illnesses, injuries, lost work time, medical evacuations, clinic utilization and equipment);

- ii. Physical Qualification (PQ) Process- to identify medical conditions that are incompatible with safe and productive deployment or to identify medical tests that are predictive and cost effective or alternatively unnecessary and lacking predictive value;
- iii. Physical Qualification (PQ) Guidelines- to identify the specific medical conditions applicable to the PQ process;
- iv. Waivers (PQ)-to provide expert opinion on selected complex waivers;
- v. Medical Care- to identify health care needs that are not adequately addressed or health care services that are not necessary;
- vi. Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC) and Administrative Transfers- to review critical patient movements to make recommendations and to identify “lessons learned”;
- vii. Other- the MRP may provide consultation on a range of medical issues such as COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, and other medical or public health concerns.

4. Membership.

a. Affiliation.

- i. The MRP is composed exclusively of full or permanent part-time officers or employees of the Federal government.
- ii. OPP employees may not serve as Panel members.
- iii. MRP members, or potential members, who identify a potential conflict of interest should inform either the MRP Chair or the OPP Senior Advisor for Safety and Occupational Health, who will then work with OPP leadership/legal to determine whether a conflict risk exists and if so, ways the risk could be mitigated (if any) prior to the MRP meeting.

b. Expertise.

- i. The panel will have a broad base of medical knowledge and the health care expertise to address OPP’s current and future medical program, issues that are commonly encountered, and significant challenges inherent in polar operations and research.
- ii. The MRP will assist SOH/OPP by recommending suitable candidates for Panel membership.

c. Chair and Vice-Chair.

- i. The OPP Senior Advisor for Medical and Safety will appoint a Chair and Vice-Chair, the latter with consultation with the Chair. The terms will be for one year, with annual renewal possible.

- d. New Member Nomination. The nomination process, and other aspects of the MRP, are detailed in the Medical Review Panel (MRP) Nomination Process for New Member Recruitment SOP.

5. Meetings.

- a. The MRP will have a primary annual meeting typically in July or August. The meeting may be virtual, hybrid, or in-person. If in-person, it will typically be at, or in close proximity to, the National Science Foundation (NSF) building.
- b. The MRP will have a virtual planning meeting about six to eight weeks prior to the primary meeting. This meeting will review agenda items for the primary meeting to assure readiness for the primary meeting.
- c. From time to time, the panel, or subsets of the panel, may have additional meetings at other times and locations to afford opportunities to meet and observe other aspects of the program.
- d. Additional virtual meetings via teleconference or videoconference may be convened to monitor progress or address specific issues.
- e. Meeting agenda will be developed jointly by the OPP Senior Advisor for Safety and Occupational Health and the MRP Chair with input from MRP members, OPP staff, medical care providers (those under contract and those military providers associated with the United States Antarctic Program), and others.
- f. Personnel directly involved in managing and executing OPP's medical activities in the Arctic and Antarctic, most of whom are contractors, are essential participants in MRP meetings and will occasionally be requested to brief the Panel on medical issues and concerns that have occurred during deployment (primarily summer seasons) as well as other topics prompted by the agenda.
- g. The MRP may request, and OPP will attempt to provide, access to individual's or information, briefings, clarification, and the like to assist the MRP in its duties.
- h. With prior SOH approval, the MRP is authorized to establish sub-committees composed of one or more of its existing members and/or others who are also full or permanent part-time Federal government employees. Any such sub-committees may not work independently of the chartered MRP and shall report its findings and recommendations to the MRP, who will then share them with the OPP Senior Advisor for Safety and Occupational Health.

6. **MRP Visits to OPP Deployment Sites/Stations.** In order for the MRP to stay familiar with the medical challenges in the deployed environment, evaluate

present medical concerns (e.g. readiness to respond to infectious disease or other emergencies), and to better be able to advise the program, annual visits by Panel members will be performed when possible considering the various deployment factors (e.g. budget issues- travel is paid, room and aircraft seat availability, and availability of an SOH/OPP team member to accompany).

7. Reports.

- a. MRP Annual Meeting and Visits to Deployment Sites/Stations.
 - i. The MRP Chair will submit a final report of the annual meeting or visit detailing the Panel's discussions, conclusions, and recommendations to OPP within 60 days of the MRP meeting or visit.
 - ii. The report should be organized according to each year's meeting/visit agenda.
 - iii. Matters of consensus or dissension should be noted as such.
- b. SOH/OPP
 - i. SOH/OPP will consider the MRP recommendations in light of policy, operational, budgetary, or other constraints, and provide a response to the MRP Chair for transmission to the full Panel, ideally within 60 days but not later than 90, of receipt of any final report.
 - ii. Written updates on actions taken in response to MRP recommendations will be provided to the MRP not later than one week in advance of each year's annual meeting.

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