



✓ Independent Medical Opinion (IMO) Checklist for VA Claims

What to Ask Your Doctor to Include (And Why It Matters)

1. Medical Record Review

✓ Clearly state: “I have reviewed the veteran’s complete medical record, including their service medical records (SMRs).”

Why it matters: VA won’t give weight to opinions that don’t show full review of the records.

2. Medical Qualifications

✓ Include:

- - Specialty (e.g., “Board-Certified Neurologist”)
- - Years of experience
- - Any VA or military-specific experience (if applicable)

3. Clear Medical Opinion Language

✓ Choose the phrase that applies:

- - “Is due to” — 100% certain
- - “More likely than not” — greater than 50%
- - “At least as likely as not” — equal to or greater than 50%
- - “Not at least as likely as not” — less than 50%
- - “Is not due to” — 0% related

4. Medical Rationale

✓ The doctor should explain why they reached their conclusion:

“Based on symptoms, history, and medical literature, I believe the condition is related to...”

✓ Cite clinical findings or diagnostics if possible.

5. Supporting Literature (Optional but Strong)

✓ Reference known studies or experience:

Example: “According to the 2022 JAMA Neurology study...”

 Tip: The stronger, clearer, and more complete the IMO, the more weight it will carry at the VA—especially when evidence is in approximate balance.

— *Theresa M. Aldrich “Tbird” – Founder, HadIt.com (Est. 1997) USN Veteran*