



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Office of Research and Engineering
Washington, DC

Medical Factual Report

May 11, 2021

Mary Pat McKay, MD, MPH
Chief Medical Officer

A. ACCIDENT: CEN21FA025; Slidell, LA

Date and time: October 21, 2020, 14:31 local

Injuries: 1 fatal

B. GROUP IDENTIFICATION

No group was formed for the medical evaluation in this accident.

C. DETAILS OF INVESTIGATION

1. Purpose

This investigation was performed to evaluate the pilot for medical conditions, the use of medications/illicit drugs, and the presence of toxins.

2. Methods

The FAA medical case review, autopsy report, toxicology findings, personal medical records, and the investigator's reports were reviewed. Relevant regulation and medical literature were reviewed as appropriate.

FAA Medical Case Review

According to the FAA medical case review, the 73 year old male pilot had reported 1600 total flight hours as of his last medical exam, dated 6/29/2012. At that time, he was 70 inches tall and weighed 167 pounds. He reported having had a coronary artery stenting procedure in 2004 to the FAA. He had been on special issuance medical certificates since 2006. At his last exam, he reported using valsartan, clopidogrel, esomeprazole, atorvastatin, and metoprolol to control his heart disease. No significant abnormalities were identified on the physical exam or review of the additional information required by the FAA and he was issued a special

issuance third class medical certificate limited by a requirement he wear corrective lenses and marked, “Not valid for any class after 6/30/2013.” The pilot had completed the BasicMed course most recently on 5/23/2019 and signed that he had completed the comprehensive medical examination checklist on 5/15/2017.

Autopsy

According to the autopsy performed by the St Tammany Parish Coroner’s Office, the cause of death was multiple blunt force injuries and the manner of death was accident. There was extensive damage to the remains; the brain, heart, and internal organs were not available for examination.

Toxicology

Toxicology testing performed by the FAA’s Forensic Sciences Laboratory identified cetirizine and metoprolol in muscle tissue.

Medication Descriptions

Valsartan is a prescription blood pressure medication often marketed as Diovan. It is not generally considered impairing.¹

Clopidogrel is an anti-platelet prescription medication, often marketed as Plavix, that may increase bleeding when there is trauma. It is not generally considered impairing.²

Esomeprazole is used to treat causes of heartburn often marketed as Nexium. It is not generally considered impairing.³

Atorvastatin is an anti-cholesterol drug often marketed as Lipitor. It is not generally considered impairing.⁴

Metoprolol is a beta-blocking drug used to treat high blood pressure and to prevent recurrent heart attacks. It is not generally considered impairing.⁵

¹ National Institutes of Health. US National Library of Medicine. DailyMed. Valsartan. <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?setid=8478a05f-38fd-412d-af49-69a73a787c8f> Accessed 5/11/2021.

² National Institutes of Health. US National Library of Medicine. DailyMed. Clopidogrel. <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?setid=52902cfe-2863-490a-b700-3f47dfe3cf50> Accessed 5/11/2021.

³ National Institutes of Health. US National Library of Medicine. DailyMed. Esomeprazole <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?setid=86aa9813-351c-4fbe-80f6-4f861f25fe1d> Accessed 5/11/2021.

⁴ National Institutes of Health. US National Library of Medicine. DailyMed. Atorvastatin. [DailyMed - Search Results for ATORVASTATIN \(nih.gov\)](#) Accessed 5/11/2021.

⁵ National Institutes of Health. US National Library of Medicine. DailyMed. Metoprolol <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?setid=90aa06a3-100f-4466-b950-506303707b01> Accessed 5/11/2021.

Cetirizine is a sedating antihistamine available over the counter in a number of products and often marketed with the name Zyrtec. It carries this warning to patients, “When using this product, drowsiness may occur; avoid alcoholic drinks; alcohol, sedatives, and tranquilizers may increase drowsiness; be careful when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery.”⁶

Personal Medical Records

Personal medical records were obtained from the pilot’s cardiologist noted that he had undergone stenting of the right coronary artery in August, 2004 following a positive stress echo, followed by stenting of the origin of the left anterior descending coronary artery in September 2004. In 2013, he had recurrent chest pain and a nuclear stress test demonstrated a reversible defect in the in the inferior wall. A cardiac catheterization demonstrated patency of the previously stented areas but a 99% stenosis of a small acute marginal branch of the right coronary that was not amenable to intervention. In September 2020, on a follow up visit, the pilot reported no cardiovascular symptoms and was routinely being treated with aspirin, clopidogrel, metoprolol, atorvastatin, valsartan, and pantoprazole. His diagnoses included high blood pressure, high cholesterol, coronary artery disease, and heartburn.

D. SUMMARY OF MEDICAL FINDINGS

The 73 year old male pilot had reported a long history of coronary artery disease and its treatment with stenting and medications to the FAA. At the time of the accident, he was certified via BasicMed.

According to the autopsy performed by the St Tammany Parish Coroner’s Office, the cause of death was multiple blunt force injuries and the manner of death was accident. There was extensive damage to the remains; the brain, heart, and internal organs were not available for examination.

Toxicology testing performed by the FAA’s Forensic Sciences Laboratory identified cetirizine and metoprolol in muscle tissue.

Review of personal medical records showed slow progression of coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and heartburn and the use of medications to treat these conditions. At a visit a few weeks before the accident, the pilot did not report any cardiovascular symptoms.

⁶ <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?setid=88166c8d-91c5-7950-063e-6465a22fe54b>
Accessed 5/11/2021.