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the bilateral factor applies, and similarly whenever there are compensable disabilities affecting use of paired extremities regardless of location or specified type of impairment.

(b) The correct procedure when applying the bilateral factor to disabilities affecting both upper extremities and both lower extremities is to combine the ratings of the disabilities affecting the 4 extremities in the order of their individual severity and apply the bilateral factor by adding, not combining, 10 percent of the combined value thus attained.

(c) The bilateral factor is not applicable unless there is partial disability of compensable degree in each of 2 paired extremities, or paired skeletal muscles.

§ 4.27 Use of diagnostic code numbers.

The diagnostic code numbers appearing opposite the listed ratable disabilities are arbitrary numbers for the purpose of showing the basis of the evaluation assigned and for statistical analysis in the Department of Veterans Affairs, and as will be observed, extend from 5000 to a possible 9999. Great care will be exercised in the selection of the applicable code number and in its citation on the rating sheet. No other numbers than these listed or hereafter furnished are to be employed for rating purposes, with an exception as described in this section, as to unlisted conditions. When an unlisted disease, injury, or residual condition is encountered, requiring rating by analogy, the diagnostic code number will be "built-up" as follows: The first 2 digits will be selected from that part of the schedule most closely identifying the part, or system, of the body involved; the last 2 digits will be "99" for all unlisted conditions. This procedure will facilitate a close check of new and unlisted conditions, rated by analogy. In the selection of code numbers, injuries will generally be represented by the number assigned to the residual condition on the basis of which the rating is determined. With diseases, preference is to be given to the number assigned to the disease itself; if the rating is determined on the basis of residual conditions, the number appropriate to the residual condition will be added, preceded by a

hyphen. Thus, rheumatoid (atrophic) arthritis rated as ankylosis of the lumbar spine should be coded "5002-5240." In this way, the exact source of each rating can be easily identified. In the citation of disabilities on rating sheets, the diagnostic terminology will be that of the medical examiner, with no attempt to translate the terms into schedule nomenclature. Residuals of diseases or therapeutic procedures will not be cited without reference to the basic disease.

[41 FR 11293, Mar. 18, 1976, as amended at 70 FR 75399, Dec. 20, 2005]

§ 4.28 Prestabilization rating from date of discharge from service.

The following ratings may be assigned, in lieu of ratings prescribed elsewhere, under the conditions stated for disability from any disease or injury. The prestabilization rating is not to be assigned in any case in which a total rating is immediately assignable under the regular provisions of the schedule or on the basis of individual unemployability. The prestabilization 50-percent rating is not to be used in any case in which a rating of 50 percent or more is immediately assignable under the regular provisions.

	Rating
Unstabilized condition with severe disability— Substantially gainful employment is not feasible or advisable .....	100
Unhealed or incompletely healed wounds or injuries— Material impairment of employability likely ..	50

NOTE (1): Department of Veterans Affairs examination is not required prior to assignment of prestabilization ratings; however, the fact that examination was accomplished will not preclude assignment of these benefits. Prestabilization ratings are for assignment in the immediate postdischarge period. They will continue for a 12-month period following discharge from service. However, prestabilization ratings may be changed to a regular schedular total rating or one authorizing a greater benefit at any time. In each prestabilization rating an examination will be requested to be accomplished not earlier than 6 months nor more than 12 months following discharge. In those prestabilization ratings in which following examination reduction in evaluation is found to be warranted, the higher evaluation will be continued to the end of the 12th month following

discharge or to the end of the period provided under § 3.105(e) of this chapter, whichever is later. Special monthly compensation should be assigned concurrently in these cases whenever records are adequate to establish entitlement.

NOTE (2): Diagnosis of disease, injury, or residuals will be cited, with diagnostic code number assigned from this rating schedule for conditions listed therein.

[35 FR 11906, July 24, 1970]

**§ 4.29 Ratings for service-connected disabilities requiring hospital treatment or observation.**

A total disability rating (100 percent) will be assigned without regard to other provisions of the rating schedule when it is established that a service-connected disability has required hospital treatment in a Department of Veterans Affairs or an approved hospital for a period in excess of 21 days or *hospital observation at Department of Veterans Affairs expense* for a service-connected disability for a period in excess of 21 days.

(a) Subject to the provisions of paragraphs (d), (e), and (f) of this section this increased rating will be effective the first day of continuous hospitalization and will be terminated effective the last day of the month of hospital discharge (regular discharge or release to non-bed care) or effective the last day of the month of termination of treatment or observation for the service-connected disability. A temporary release which is approved by an attending Department of Veterans Affairs physician as part of the treatment plan will not be considered an absence.

(1) An authorized absence in excess of 4 days which begins during the first 21 days of hospitalization will be regarded as the equivalent of hospital discharge effective the first day of such authorized absence. An authorized absence of 4 days or less which results in a total of more than 8 days of authorized absence during the first 21 days of hospitalization will be regarded as the equivalent of hospital discharge effective the ninth day of authorized absence.

(2) Following a period of hospitalization in excess of 21 days, an authorized absence in excess of 14 days or a third consecutive authorized absence of 14 days will be regarded as the equivalent of hospital discharge and will interrupt

hospitalization effective on the last day of the month in which either the authorized absence in excess of 14 days or the third 14 day period begins, except where there is a finding that convalescence is required as provided by paragraph (e) or (f) of this section. The termination of these total ratings will not be subject to § 3.105(e) of this chapter.

(b) Notwithstanding that hospital admission was for disability not connected with service, if during such hospitalization, hospital treatment for a service-connected disability is instituted and continued for a period in excess of 21 days, the increase to a total rating will be granted from the first day of such treatment. If service connection for the disability under treatment is granted after hospital admission, the rating will be from the first day of hospitalization if otherwise in order.

(c) The assignment of a total disability rating on the basis of hospital treatment or observation will not preclude the assignment of a total disability rating otherwise in order under other provisions of the rating schedule, and consideration will be given to the propriety of such a rating in all instances and to the propriety of its continuance after discharge. Particular attention, with a view to proper rating under the rating schedule, is to be given to the claims of veterans discharged from hospital, regardless of length of hospitalization, with indications on the final summary of expected confinement to bed or house, or to inability to work with requirement of frequent care of physician or nurse at home.

(d) On these total ratings Department of Veterans Affairs regulations governing effective dates for increased benefits will control.

(e) The total hospital rating if convalescence is required may be continued for periods of 1, 2, or 3 months in addition to the period provided in paragraph (a) of this section.

(f) Extension of periods of 1, 2 or 3 months beyond the initial 3 months may be made upon approval of the Veterans Service Center Manager.

(g) Meritorious claims of veterans who are discharged from the hospital