



# National Transportation Safety Board

Heart of Texas Hot Air  
Balloon Rides  
Kubíček BB85Z Balloon  
Lockhart, Texas  
July 30, 2016  
Nicholas Webster MD  
Medical Investigator



# Medical Conditions

- Chronic pain
- Fibromyalgia
- Type II diabetes
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Alcohol dependence
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Depression

# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

- Deficits in attention and susceptibility to distraction
- Pilot status: ADHD not well controlled

# Depression

- Depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, impaired thinking, concentrating, decision-making
  - Persistent cognitive symptoms after treatment
- Pilot status: depression not well controlled
  - 3 months before accident
    - Symptomatic
    - Medications restarted; no additional information

# Medications

- Prescribed 13 medications
  - Many likely not impairing
- Toxicology: 5 likely impairing medications
  - Three prescription
    - Cyclobenzaprine, diazepam, oxycodone
  - Two over-the-counter
    - Dextromethorphan, diphenhydramine

# Drug Interactions and Information

- Combination magnifies impairing psychoactive effects
- FAA resources
  - “*Do Not Issue - Do Not Fly*” lists
  - “*Unaware of impair*”

# Pilot Impairment

- Effect on decision-making
  - Depression
  - Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
  - Combined effects of multiple central nervous system-impairing drugs

# FAA Medical Certification

- Not held by pilot
- Certification exam
  - Comprehensive pilot history of medical conditions
  - Medication use
  - Examination by an aviation medical examiner
- NDR check



# Balloon Pilot Exemption

- Commercial pilots medical certification exemption: 14 *CFR* 61.23(a)(b)
- Eliminated opportunity to identify issues
  - AME evaluation of conditions and medications
  - FAA awareness of drug and alcohol offenses

