

Medi Scene

Keeping You Up-to-Date with the Industrial Commission • May 2014

Examining the Issues: The FCE

As you work through the packet of records for an Ohio Industrial Commission (OIC) Permanent Total Disability (PTD) Independent Medical Evaluation (IME), you might come across a Functional Capacity Evaluation (FCE). This form has likely been placed in the packet as evidence by the Injured Worker, the Employer, or by the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation.

FCEs have been promoted as providing a measurement of an individual's physical ability to perform a series of work-related tasks. FCEs have been used by parties in workers' compensation cases for some time. They determine treatment plans and rehabilitation outcomes, as well as whether an individual can return to work.

The reliability and validity of the FCE to predict the ability of a person to return to work on a sustained basis has been questioned in the medical literature (Gross, et al, J Occup Rehabil, 2005; Gross, et al, Spine, 2004).

There are pitfalls in relying on an FCE when formulating an opinion during an OIC PTD IME. The first is the substantial inherent variation in FCEs. There is no accepted standard. Variables include the length of the FCE, training and

qualifications of the evaluator, expectations of the referral source, and management of behaviors such as effort during the testing.

Another pitfall is more specific to the OIC PTD IME. As stated here before, an OIC PTD IME is a focused examination. The specialist examiner is asked to answer specific questions regarding specific allowed conditions. It is required that the opinion consider limitations due solely to the allowed conditions. A test of an individual's ability to perform a series of work-related tasks, such as the FCE, is unable to distinguish the impact of unrelated physical, mental, and behavioral factors on performance. So, a specialist examiner who relies on the FCE for an opinion on physical limitations might unwittingly be considering limitations due to conditions not allowed in the claim.

Can the FCE be considered when formulating an opinion during an OIC PTD IME? Yes. However, the examining specialist should understand the potential pitfalls of doing so, and make it clear in the report that only impairment due to the allowed condition is being considered. This requires the specialist to use a broad scope of training and experience to distinguish limitations due to allowed (versus non-allowed) conditions.



Online Records Review

Congratulations to all of our specialists who have successfully transitioned to online record review. We are now statewide! The following are reminders for prudent use, review, and documentation:

- Access the records through the Industrial Commission website, not BWC's website, and click the ICON tab
- If you are not sure how to do this task, follow this web site link to [Electronic Records Access](#)
- Still not sure? Call our Helpdesk at (614) 644-6595 or toll free at (877) 218-4810, and we will walk you through it
- When you get there, you will be looking for a SPEC PAC and SPEC PAC SUP. These are what you need to review
- In your report, please document: "I reviewed the records provided to me by the Industrial Commission"

Reminder!

List the Allowed Conditions

At the outset of your report, please list all of the allowed conditions in all of the claims under consideration for PTD. These allowed conditions can be found on the Statement of Facts and the Medical Examination Worksheet. Then, consider in your report only those allowed conditions on which you are asked to opine. It is important for all parties involved to know that you are aware of all of the allowed conditions.