



Keeping You Up-to-Date with the Industrial Commission • April 2012

Examining the Issues- Describing Limitations

One of the questions asked at the time of an Industrial Commission(IC) Permanent Total Disability (PTD) examination is this: **"In your narrative report provide a discussion setting forth physical or mental limitations resulting from the allowed condition."** This seems pretty straightforward, right? Some of the responses (or lack thereof) we've received in reports suggest there might be some confusion about this question, and hopefully the following will provide a successful approach to this question.

First, we understand that the wording to this question has changed in the last two years. It used to be a "check the box" question. It used to be a "fill out the form" question. We still ask that you fill out the form (for example, the Physical Strength Rating or Occupational Activity Assessment forms), however now it is required that the specialist examiner provide a more detailed expert opinion about what the injured worker can be expected to do or not do based on the allowed conditions in the claim.

Here are some guiding principles:

- **Your opinion regarding limitations should be highly individualized.** Each report should specify limitations due to the allowed conditions that are unique to that individual's condition. The physical exertion classifications from the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (for example, sedentary, light, heavy) are useful, but do not adequately or completely describe limitations in any one individual.
- **Your opinion may be different than the injured worker's subjective description of limitations.** As an expert specialist examiner, it is likely that you have seen in your experience and training many similar conditions as those you are asked to evaluate in an IC PTD examination. It is expected that you should know how this condition might likely affect the injured worker. As part of your evaluation, a detailed history should be obtained and recorded, including the injured worker's complaints, and the impact of their symptoms on activities of daily living. However, the findings in the medical record, test results, and the findings of your physical examination must also be relied upon in formulating your opinion of what you reasonably believe would be physical or mental limitations due to the allowed conditions.
- **Your opinion is one piece of evidence in the Hearing Officer's consideration of the question of PTD.** Please understand your limited role in this process. While it is important that you paint a clear picture of the physical or mental limitations due to the allowed conditions specific to that injured worker, it is equally important that you do not consider other factors which might contribute to disability, such as age, education, work experience, or unrelated physical or mental conditions.
- **The question is not about suitability for the injured worker's former position of employment.** You need not give an opinion about whether or not the injured worker can go back to their old job. Simply list any physical or mental limitations due to the allowed conditions.
- **The injured worker may have conditions unrelated to the claim that result in physical or mental limitations.** It is important to separate these in your mind and make it clear in your report that you are not considering these other unrelated conditions.

The following questions might be helpful to ask yourself when formulating your opinion:

"Based on my interview, review of the record (including test results), and examination of this injured worker, and considering only the conditions allowed in this claim, would they be able to..."

For Psychological Conditions

- Work under stress?
- Take directions?
- Respond appropriately to authority?
- Interact with the public?
- Make complex decisions?
- Demonstrate initiative?
- Behave appropriately in the workplace?
- Sustain concentration for task completion at a reasonable pace?
- Demonstrate appropriate judgment, awareness of sensitivities, and social maturity?
- Not fear the workplace environment?
- Get along with others?
- Adapt to the work environment?
- Work in a team environment?
- Work independently or without supervision?

For Physical Conditions

- Walk, with or without an assistive device for specified distances or intervals?
- Talk, type, write, read or otherwise communicate?
- Grasp, hold, feel or handle?
- Push, pull?
- Kneel, crawl, bend, reach, climb?
- Perform activities with limitation of an extremity?
- Lift with weight restrictions at various frequencies?
- Sit or stand for limited periods?
- Smell, see, taste?
- Ride, fly, drive?
- Perform basic self care such as toileting, bathing, dressing, grooming, eating?
- Perform housework or yard work?

Continuing Education review questions MediScene- April 2012

1. The specialist examiner in a PTD IME should always make sure to consider age, education, experience, and medical conditions unrelated to the claim when formulating an opinion about an injured worker's physical or mental limitations.
 - A. True
 - B. False
2. When considering limitations due to the allowed conditions, it is adequate to report the history provided by the injured worker regarding pain, mental abilities or ADLs.
 - A. True
 - B. False
3. The role of the specialist examiner in a PTD IME is to determine if an injured worker can go back to their former job.
 - A. True
 - B. False
4. The best description of an injured worker's physical limitations can be found in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles physical exertion classifications.
 - A. True
 - B. False
5. AMA Guides, Fifth Edition, requires Mental and Behavioral Health specialists to provide an assessment, review and classification of the injured worker's impairment in four functional areas. (Section 14.3, pages 361-364)
 - A. True
 - B. False

6. AMA Guides, Fifth Edition, requires musculoskeletal specialists to provide a review of the injured worker's ADLs *excluding work* (Table 1-2, pages 4 and 5) and pain complaints (Table 18-4, pages 576 and 577).
- A. True
 - B. False

(Answers: 1. through 4. are False; 5. and 6. are True)