

The Mental Status Examination

“To seize the true character of mental derangement in a given case, and to pronounce an infallible prognosis of the event, is often a task of particular delicacy, and requires the united exertion of great discernment, of extensive knowledge and of incorruptible integrity.”

- Pinel, *Treatise on Insanity*, 1801

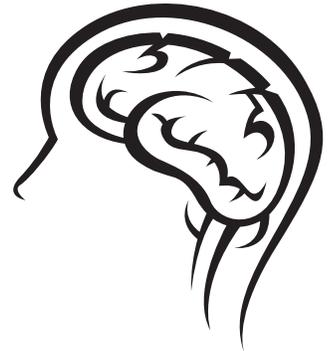
No doubt the examination of an injured worker’s mental state presents a great challenge. To then present it in an “infallible” manner in a report relevant to the evaluation of impairment for the purpose of determining permanent total disability is even more formidable. Below are suggestions meant to serve as footholds for your ascent:

- 1. Follow a standard approach.** The Industrial Commission relies on the method described in *AMA Guides*, Fifth Edition, for evaluation of mental and behavioral health disorders. Fortunately, on page 371, the Guides provides an outline of the required content of the mental status examination (MSE). It is understood that each clinical situation may require some variation in emphasis of the components of the examination, and the sequence of the examination. However, by and large, the same questions need to be answered.
- 2. Record actual observations.** As straightforward as this might seem, it is surprising how many examiners wander off the trail and report their own assessment of the injured worker’s performance during the various components of the MSE. Some even report the injured worker’s own description

of their mental state. (These diversions are akin to the gastroenterologist reporting during an abdominal examination that “the bowels sound normal” or that the patient feels they have “too much gas”!) The MSE should describe what is seen and heard. This means describing the actual behavior of and responses from the examinee. This is particularly important when assessing specific cognitive components which may have neuroanatomic correlates.

- 3. Recognize cultural and educational limitations of the MSE.** Questions testing fund of knowledge, memory, insight, reasoning, and judgment are particularly prone to be culturally biased and result in “false positive” or misleading responses.

- 4. Paint a picture.** Imagine if there was no television or internet, and you wanted to learn the details about a royal wedding happening thousands of miles away, overseas. What would you want to know? What details would you expect the fashion reporter to tell you about the royal attire? Would you want to know details about who was there and what was said? Would you be interested in what was served?



For an insightful review of the mental status examination (by David C. Martin), as well as additional references, go to <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK320/>.

Did you Know?

The Ohio Psychological Association (OPA) is sponsoring a workshop on March 16, 2013, at Quest Business and Conference Center, just north of Columbus. The focus of the workshop will be Ohio Industrial Commission (IC) Permanent Total Disability Examinations and it will feature speakers from both the OPA and the IC. Save the date!

Continuing education review questions MediScene Jan. 2013

1. All of the following references should be utilized for Industrial Commission (IC) mental and behavioral health Permanent Total Disability (PTD) independent medical evaluations (IME) except:
 - A. AMA Guides 5th Edition.
 - B. AMA Guides 2nd Edition.
 - C. Treatise on Insanity.
 - D. IC Medical Examination Manual.
2. The following information should be reported for the mental status examination (MSE):
 - A. Observations of appearance and behavior.
 - B. The injured worker's responses to specific questions.
 - C. The examiner's assessment of the relevance of specific responses.
 - D. The injured worker's description of their functional status.
 - E. A. and B.
 - F. C. and D.
3. Cultural and educational variations may impact these components of the MSE:
 - A. Memory.
 - B. Reasoning.
 - C. Judgment
 - D. Insight.
 - E. Fund of knowledge.
 - F. All of the above.

(Answers: 1. C.; 2. E.; 3. F.)