

the employee back to work in some capacity rather than having him or her languish at home on total disability. Toward this end, developing good, credible medical evidence at the outset is the cornerstone of any effective return to work strategy.

PSIA

## PSIA FUTURE EVENTS

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Fall Workshop  
October 24, 2003  
Holiday Inn  
Grantville, PA

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A to Z  
Workers' Compensation  
Administrative & Management

Training Course  
April 14-16, 2004  
Hershey Lodge &  
Convention Center  
Hershey, PA

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Annual Meeting  
June 16-18, 2004  
Hershey Hotel  
Hershey, PA

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Fall Workshop  
October, 2004  
Gettysburg, PA

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Regional Meetings  
November, 2004

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## GETTING THE INFORMATION YOU NEED FROM AN IME

by Attorney Gerryanne Cauler, RN  
Thomas, Thomas and Hafer, LLP

Obtaining an independent medical exam (IME) to verify the claimant's injuries and physical capabilities is an important and valuable tool in managing workers' compensation claims. An IME will also assist you to determine if your claimant is receiving appropriate treatment. However, it opens up many questions for the employer or insurer. How do I set up an IME? How do I pick a physician? What specialty should the physician be? What information do I need from the physician? What information does the physician need from me?

This article will focus on the information you need to provide to the physician you have chosen to perform the IME and the questions you should ask to get the information you need. It is assumed that you have found an appropriate physician in the correct specialty, to render an opinion on the medical state of your claimant.

First and foremost, send all of the medical records you have obtained to the physician you have chosen to perform the IME. It is ideal to send the records two to three weeks in advance of the scheduled visit. However, the time frame in a workers' compensation claim can move

quickly. Send the records as quickly as you can. To assist the physician place all records in binders, grouped by provider and placed in chronological order. It is also helpful to provide the physician with a typed or clearly written table of contents. This will assist the physician to perform a quick, but thorough review of the claimant's medical history and treatment plan. Providing the records prior to the scheduled exam will not only help the physician to prepare for the exam, but will also allow the physician to determine if any other records are required for a complete evaluation.

The most important part of preparing the physician for the independent medical exam is the letter from you to the physician. The letter will clarify for the physician the concerns and questions you would like to be addressed during the IME. At minimum, the letter should list the events surrounding the work-related injury, the claimant's past medical history as known to you, the questions you want to be addressed and a list of all information you would like to obtain from the IME.

Suggested structure for an IME letter from the insurer/employer to the physician performing the IME:

- [1] Introduce yourself and who you represent and your relationship to the claimant. Inform the physician of the best way to communicate with you, phone, e-mail, etc.
- [2] Give a history of the claimant's contentions and a history of the

injury. Include the claimant's job description.

- [3] Summarize what medical records you have enclosed, highlighting the significant events and diagnostic studies.
- [4] Identify exactly what you want to know. Such as:
  - a. Causation
  - b. Diagnosis
  - c. Treatment plan
  - d. Alternative treatment plans
  - e. Can the claimant perform the functions listed on the job description?
  - f. Can the job description be modified?
- [5] Recommend a telephone conference before the physician prepares his or her written report to ensure that all questions have been addressed and all relevant medical information was recorded.
- [6] Ask specific questions when communicating with the physician:
  - a. What were the objective findings compared to the subjective complaints?
  - b. Are the findings consistent with the injury?
  - c. Are the complaints of physical limitations consistent with the injury?
  - d. Are any further studies recommended?
  - e. Has the claimant reached maximum medical

improvement?

- f. When would full recovery be expected?
- g. Will the claimant ever be able to return to his or her previous job?

By providing medical records and specific questions to address, you will obtain the information that you need from the IME. Following this process should streamline the process and assist you to obtain better results.

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**ASK  
AN  
EXPERT**