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*Delivering patient-centered medical care*  
Medication Optimization Electrodiagnostic Testing Medical Legal Evaluations

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## COVID-19 Update - 4/9/20

### **We are Excited to Offer Telehealth AME/QMEs!**

A primary limitation for performing medical legal evaluations via telehealth is an inability to perform AMA Guides 5<sup>th</sup> Edition specific measurements such as range of motion, muscle strength testing, reflexes, and sensibility. Although it is our preference to include these measurements in all of our examinations, they are only required when an Applicant has reached maximal medical improvement (MMI).

### **We Remain Committed to Serving Injured Workers!**

#### **Benefits to Applicant by receiving Telehealth AME/QMEs:**

Our board-certified physicians are able to

- Address AOE/COE issues on delayed or denied cases or body parts
- Obtain a comprehensive history
- Review, summarize, and analyze medical records
- Perform an observational examination
- Provide preliminary or definitive diagnoses
- Outline recommendations for or request diagnostic studies that assist in formulating definitive diagnoses, future treatment considerations, or are required for an accurate impairment determination
- Determine P&S/MMI status
- Provide an impairment determination in selected cases using DBE or DRE methods
- Address return to work restrictions and completion of the Physician Return-to-Work Voucher form
- Recommend future medical care that may facilitate case resolution, achieve better outcomes, or serve as a basis for settlement negotiations

#### **Benefits to All Parties and the California Workers' Compensation System:**

- Address disputed issues
- Prevent back-log of AME/QMEs when stay-at-home order is lifted
- Move cases forward toward resolution
- Supported by the DWC (see excerpt from the DWC Newsline dated 3/29/20 below)

## DWC Newsline

During the stay-at-home order (up to May 1, 2020), **DWC finds that it may be beneficial for parties to allow telehealth for QME evaluations when an in-person physical examination is not necessary.** DWC strongly recommends that **all of the following conditions apply to a telehealth evaluation** to promote the health and safety of all parties:

1. The injured worker is able to participate in the telehealth evaluation without violating the stay-at-home order.
2. The **medical issue in dispute is determined to be essential to an injured worker's benefits and must be addressed no later than May 1, 2020.** The dispute must involve:
  - a. An evaluation relating to **whether or not the injury is Arising Out of Employment/Course of Employment (AOE/COE),**
  - b. **Termination of an injured worker's indemnity benefit payments, or**
  - c. **Work restrictions**
3. There is **written agreement of the injured worker, carrier or employer, and the QME.**
4. The telehealth evaluation is **consistent with appropriate medical practices and ethical considerations.**
5. The QME attests that the **evaluation of the injured worker can be done effectively and safely by way of a telehealth evaluation and does not require an in-person physical examination....**

A note on telehealth visits during this emergency: **The decision as to when a telehealth visit can be employed must rest on the principles of appropriate and ethical medical practice.** An in-person physical examination **is necessary if the injured employee's relevant health issues are such that a physical examination done in person has significant likelihood to contribute to the examiner's ability to formulate an accurate diagnosis, or to more accurately gauge the outcome of treatment already provided.** In such an instance, **parties should evaluate whether the evaluation can be cancelled or postponed. If such circumstances do not require an in-person examination, then a telehealth visit should be allowed.**

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**Thank you so much for your referrals!**

**Visit our website for continued updates. We're in this together!**

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