

IME Physician Survey

Highlights

General information

- When IME physicians were asked how much of their practice was performing IMEs,
 - 63 percent responded that IMEs were 10 percent or less of their practice
 - 20 percent that IMEs were 11 to 50 percent of their practice
 - And 17 percent that IMEs were 51 to 100 percent of their practice
- When asked how many IMEs they performed each year,
 - 35 percent performed 1 to 10
 - 18 percent 11 to 30
 - 35 percent 31 to 75
 - And 12 percent more than 75
- Eighty-five percent maintained a private practice. Sixty-five percent served as attending physicians for WC patients and saw a median of 50 WC patients a year.
- Sixty-five percent performed IMEs in their office, 24 percent in facilities, and 26 percent in both.
- Twenty-two percent had contracted with insurance companies to perform IMEs; including one who had a contractually guaranteed minimum.
- Eighty-three percent would allow the injured worker to bring a representative to the IME, and 61 percent would allow the IME to be recorded.

IME panels

- Forty-two percent did not participate on a panel IME, 28 percent participated on 1 to 10 a year, 15 percent on 11 to 25, and 16 percent on more than 25 a year.
- When asked what happens when members disagree on conclusions, 75 percent of the comments stated that the physicians discuss and negotiate with each other. If no agreement could be reached, members would state their disagreements openly in separate sections of the IME report (10%).

Workers' knowledge and understanding of IME

- Thirty-eight percent felt that insurers very well to moderately prepared injured workers on what to expect at the IME, 44 percent felt that they were slightly prepared, and 18 percent felt they were not at all prepared.
- Forty-eight percent felt injured workers very well to moderately understood IMEs, 49 percent felt they slightly understood, and 3 percent felt they did not understand at all.
- When asked for three ideas to better prepare injured workers, the three most common were
 - Provide injured workers with booklet/pamphlet that explains the purpose of the IME (44%)
 - Require IME physicians to explain the purpose of the exam and its nature (16%)
 - Require claims adjusters to have all necessary medical records available and that the injured worker is provided with clear directions to IME (10%)

IME reports

- Nine percent would often consult with the claims examiner prior to drafting the IME report, 46 percent would seldom contact the examiner, and 44 percent never consult the examiner.
- Comments regarding consultation with the examiner focused upon clarification of the insurers' questions (33%) and requests for medical records or additional records (15%); also, there were several comments that it would be conflict of interest and therefore did not consult the examiner (21%).

- Twenty-one percent reported than an insurer representative attempt to influence their IME report.
- Comments regarding insurer influence focused upon biased and leading insurer questions (26%) and requests for clarifications, rewording, or rephrasing of the IME report (30%).
- Thirty-seven percent always looked at actual diagnostic studies as opposed to only looking at the diagnostic report, 43 percent often reviewed the studies, 13 percent seldom reviewed the studies, and 7 percent never reviewed the studies.

Comments

- When asked to respond to complaints received by WCD that IME physicians were considered biased toward insurers, 53% agreed there was bias. IME physicians commented that,
 - Some IME physicians are biased, but they are a minority (36%)
 - That they personally looked at the facts (28%)
 - That they disagreed with the complaints (14%)
 - That they agreed with the complaints (11%)
 - Another 5% indicated that there is bias.
- When asked what IME physicians considered to be the three main misconceptions about IMEs and IME physicians, the three most common responses were,
 - IME physicians were biased towards insurers (25%)
 - IME physicians worked directly for the insurers (24%)
 - And IMEs were fair, independent, and unbiased (12%)
- When asked what improvements IME physicians would recommend, the three most common suggestions were,
 - Have more physicians with private practices to limit their reliance upon IMEs; randomly select IME physicians (29%)
 - Getting accurate and up-to-date medical records and scans to the IME physicians (19%)
 - More accountability upon IME physicians; create standards and require feedback (9%)