

ADVANTAGE THERAPY INDUSTRY UPDATE

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Let's Discuss Functional Capacity Evaluations

When is the evaluation useful? What are the components of a quality evaluation?



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What is the purpose of a Functional Capacity Evaluation (FCE)?

An FCE is a comprehensive physical assessment of an injured worker's functional abilities and yields objective results. The evaluation is 3-4 hours, which includes an in-depth review of medical history and charting of pain symptoms. When complete, the report may be used to help determine disability ratings, levels of impairment, and/or to test an injured worker's reliability and consistency of effort.

There are many types of FCE testing equipment. What features make a quality test and a quality report?

Choosing an FCE provider for your injured worker is just as important as choosing a doctor to treat your employee immediately following an injury. There are numerous types of software and testing systems that measure injured workers' abilities, but choosing a testing system where the results have been proven valid in court is an important part of obtaining a quality FCE.

Look for an FCE provider that provides the following measurements of reliability and consistency:

1. Injured worker wears a heart rate monitor during the duration of the test.
2. Consistency between trials is measured to ensure that the injured worker is giving a true effort.
3. Gives a range for expected measures and the source of any inconsistencies (i.e. heart rate does not meet expected change to match report of pain, difference between trials, etc.)

What is the difference between a "reliable effort" and a "valid test"?

The term "validity" should not be used to measure the integrity of an injured worker's effort during testing. Terms like reliable effort, self-limited effort, and unreliable effort should be used to give the employer/physician confidence that the report is a true representation of what the injured worker can do.

What is the test administrator observing throughout the evaluation?

FCE administrators should be experienced physical or occupational therapists. An experienced test administrator will observe and document pain behaviors (facial grimace, grasping body parts, vocalization of discomfort, slow movements, etc.), inconsistencies in behavior (i.e. can't lean forward for range of motion measurements, but easily picks up box off the floor), and the therapist may watch the injured worker enter and leave the clinic to see if their movements during testing match how they open a car door, etc.

What information is helpful for the test administrator to know prior to the evaluation?

A job description listing the physical demands of the position is helpful in determining if the injured worker's abilities meet the minimum requirements of the job. If physical demands are not listed in the description, or if no description is provided, the administrator will consult the Dictionary of Occupational Titles to find a listing similar to the injured worker's job.

When is it ideal to have the evaluation performed?

An FCE can be used for different purposes and may be performed at different times. For example, the test may be ordered mid-treatment to aid a physician in determining if further treatment is warranted or to identify malingering. It can be used at the end of treatment (MMI), to assign a rating. Ideally, the FCE is used to ensure that the injured worker can safely return to work.

HAVE YOU FOUND THE ONE MISPELLED WORD?

The first **5** people to call us with the misspelled word will win a **\$5 Starbucks gift card.**

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Applying the research in a real-world scenario

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Patient is a 53 year-old female, working as a custodian for a local school district.

Patient injured her back while lifting in September 2015. She is referred with a diagnosis of lumbar disc bulge.

Prior treatments include injections, traditional physical therapy, muscle relaxer & hydrocodone prescription.

The purpose of the FCE is to aid the referring physician in establishing an impairment rating.

Case Example

Patient was referred to Advantage Therapy for a full FCE in February 2016.

Behaviors noted while the patient was in the clinic include:

- Reported pain as “about a 9” out of 10
- Greater trunk movement during handling/fingering testing than throughout other aspects of testing
- Walked faster when pushing and pulling a 40 lb. cart than when walking without cart or weight
- Exerted more force than expected when placed at a mechanical disadvantage during 3 static lifting tests
- Heart rate did not change as expected during 3 different lifting tests

Patient’s demonstrated ability did not meet the lifting requirements for medium category work, but only represented her minimum capabilities. The referring physician was able to consider the injured worker’s self-limited performance, including objective measurements and observed behaviors, to assign a rating that could decrease employer liability and reduce the settlement value.

A copy of the full report was given to the referring physician and case manager 24-hours after the evaluation was completed.



Every company, every injury, and every patient is unique. If you are not receiving excellent care and service from your work comp therapy provider, make a change! We would be happy to meet with you to discuss your needs. Please contact Andrea Graddy at 417-889-4800.

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