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Introduction

This special issue of *NeuroRehabilitation* focuses on functional capacity and impairment rating practices. These specialty evaluation services are not new to the medical and allied health care professions, but have recently attracted an inordinate amount of interest and attention among many medical and allied health care practitioners. This sudden interest has evolved as a direct result of health maintenance organizations (HMO) in the early 1980s, and the more recent managed care insurance programs in the mid- to late 1990s. While it is true that the medical community enjoyed an unregulated reimbursement market from the turn of the century through the mid-1970s, today's practitioners are having to develop marketing strategies and ancillary services in order to capture lost revenues as a result of contained reimbursements. Impairment rating and functional capacity evaluation services have evolved to meet the need of medical and allied health care practitioners to explore new service delivery markets, and to meet the demand for such services in the expanding judicial area of personal injury, workers' compensation, and product liability litigation.

This special issue on functional capacity evaluation provides the reader with relevant information regarding the evolution, process, and application of functional capacity evaluation and impairment rating services. Topics included within the six manuscripts cover such interest areas as the American with Disabilities Act of 1990, the credentialing movement within both impairment rating and functional capacity evaluation service delivery systems, the role and function of the physician and neuropsychologist in the impairment

rating and functional capacity evaluation service delivery systems, and a thorough review of both service systems coupled with case studies.

Dr Sawyer begins this issue with a detailed review of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Specifically, he details how this Act has changed the manner in which evaluations are administered, scored, and interpreted. Dr Sawyer notes that more emphasis is placed on job-related capacity and functional abilities rather than on the more traditional medical issues of range of motion and diagnosis.

May et al. provide a detailed review of the functional capacity evaluation process with a brief review of impairment rating principles as defined by the American Medical Association and published in the *AMA Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment*, 4th Edition. This article addresses the certification movement in both the functional capacity evaluation and impairment rating service delivery systems.

Bowler reviews the technological advances made in the functional capacity evaluation process, identifying software programs and hardware systems which are designed specifically for the FCE process. He reviews the principles of an objective assessment process and demonstrates through a case study as to how the impairment rating process can be easily integrated in the functional capacity evaluation.

Hunter et al. introduce the reader to the physician's role and function in the impairment rating process. They provide a detailed review of the historical and philosophical concepts which helped structure the current rating process as it is prac-

ticed in clinical settings. One of the more interesting components of this article is the discussion of the attorney's role and function in the process, as well as the legal motives for and applications of impairment rating services.

Two of the articles in this special issue are similar in context, as one addresses the application of the functional capacity evaluation process in brain injury disability, while the other addresses the role of the neuropsychologist in evaluating cognitive and behavioral consequences of brain injury and neurologic function. Martelli et al. describe a vulnerability, stress, and coping model which is designed to provide a better understanding of variability in functional outcomes following brain injury. Macciocchi describes the application of neuropsychological assessment in the functional capacity evaluation process, and provides a neuropsychological model approach to assess functional capacity following brain injury.

Evaluating function and rating impairment re-

quires additional training and skill development. Educational programs have been developed to satisfy the growing interest in learning and developing evaluation skills, and certification programs are in place with established standards of practice based on research. A clinician entering into this specialty field provides a service which is in high demand and one which is desperately needed for clarifying disability issues as presented in civil courts and industrial hearings. Hopefully the reader will find a method suitable for his or her practice after reading the issue.

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