

California Needs to Make Improvements in Guideline Implementation

TO THE EDITOR:

We are a large multi-specialty practice of Interventional Pain Management in California, treating a significant proportion of injured workers with chronic pain. As elaborated on by Manchikanti et al (1,2), we have been observing the effects of misuse and abuse of flawed ACOEM Guidelines 2nd edition (3) that were adopted in 2004 as presumptively correct for purposes of utilization review by the California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Workers Compensation (DWC).

Specifically, we have seen first hand how ACOEM guidelines have been cited by utilization reviewers and used as a cover for worker's compensation insurance carriers to deny medically reasonable and necessary treatment for injured workers with chronic pain.

Fortunately, reason has prevailed in California and the Division of Workers Compensation has considered and rejected the recently updated ACOEM Guidelines on Low Back Disorders (4) and Chronic Pain (5), and instead is incorporating language into its updated Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule

from the Work Loss Data Institute's Official Disability Guidelines. The new MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines (6) have resulted from enlightened collaboration of DWC and a Medical Evidence Evaluation and Assessment Committee, which included input from qualified expert representatives in Interventional Pain Management. We believe these developments will result in better access to quality medical care and improved outcomes and overall lower costs for injured workers in California.

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