



## PERSONAL INJURY ASSESSMENT SERVICES



## MARCH NEWSLETTER

### New Expert

We are very pleased to welcome Catherine Pritchard to our team of experts. Catherine's specialty is hand and upper limb therapy. Catherine is one of a handful of Certified Hand Therapists working in Australia. Catherine completed a Hand Therapy Fellowship at the Philadelphia Hand Centre in 2006 and has worked in acute inpatient and private practice settings before and since completing her fellowship. Catherine currently works as a Hand Therapist in two private practices in the Sydney area.

Catherine also has expertise in spinal cord and orthopaedic injury rehabilitation following extensive clinical experience working in a variety of acute inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation settings both in Australia and overseas. She has been a guest speaker at conferences and a clinical teacher.

Without doubt her opinion in these areas will be highly regarded by the Courts.

### Joint Expert Reports

Over the past 12 months some of our experts have participated in pre trial joint conferences with opposing experts. We thought you may find the feedback of their experiences helpful.

In most cases the claimants' experts were instructed to confer with the opposing experts to "produce a report on matters agreed and disagreed". Taken literally this could have been achieved in a matter of minutes, but in fact there was an implied understanding that the experts were required to do a "degree" of negotiating with the objective of reaching a definitive agreement without compromising their genuinely held opinions.

On some points agreement was easily reached but this was usually due to one of the experts not having been provided with a particular report, for example a surgeon's report citing a need for future surgery.

However all experts agreed that reviewing each of their recommendations / opinions for each past care period and future care scenario involved a full appraisal of their reports and supporting documents and required considerable discussion. In all it was a very onerous task made particularly difficult if they were given little time and did not have the all the reports relied upon by the other party.

Our experts feel the process could be more efficient if:

- they are each provided with the same reports before pre trial joint conferences
- they have been given enough notice so they can put time aside to meet face to face rather than via phone conferences (three to four weeks notice is needed to make this possible)
- as much time as possible is given to prepare the joint report
- the instructions are more specific.

### Spinal Injury

An interesting article from the Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation discusses the impact of aging for a person with a spinal cord injury. This article, based on a study of 352 individuals with a spinal cord injury, demonstrated that as a person with a spinal cord injury ages, their requirement for care with activities of daily living increases. Previous studies have also shown similar results.

The requirement for higher levels of care for those with a spinal cord injury was associated with medical complications which compound the degree of impairment, for example pressure ulcers, gender (women tend to require higher levels of care than men) and the number of years post injury.

This information has important implications for therapists when determining a client's future care needs and is considered and referenced as relevant. This is an example of how CDC Experts apprise themselves of the available literature to ensure a comprehensive report for all clients. We enclose the full article to add to your reference library.

*Reference: Liem, N., McColl, M., King, W., Smith, K. (2004) Aging with a spinal cord injury: factors associated with the need for more help with activities of daily living. Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, 2004; Volume 85: 1567-1577.*

Kind Regards

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