

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES:

*Everything you ever wanted to know...
but were afraid to ask*

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Learning Objectives



Distinguish between psychological and neuropsychological assessments of work-related injuries



Discuss common methods and tests used in psychological and neuropsychological IMEs



Identify which type of evaluation to request



Describe and discuss how to frame questions to guide the examination

Key Terms

- **Clinical psychology:** a specialty within psychology that involves assessing and treating people with psychological problems or disorders.
- **Neuropsychology:** a subspecialty of clinical psychology, focused on the relationship between **brain function and behavior**

Traumatic brain injury (TBI):

Brain injury caused by an outside force

Categorized as mild, moderate, or severe



The Purpose of an IME

- In cases where record review is insufficient to establish a claim
- An *independent* medical provider evaluates the claimant in order to:
 - Establish the presence of a valid condition
 - Determine if the condition is causing impairment
 - Determine the causality of the condition



The Purpose of a Psychological IME

- **Goal:** to provide relevant *psychological data* to assist the claim adjudicator in rendering a decision

Common referral questions:

Is the claimed impairment related to a psychological injury or mental condition?

Are psychological factors delaying a claimant's ability to recover from physical injuries?

Required for certain conditions and procedures per the MT Utilization and Treatment Guidelines

*CRPS; spinal cord stimulators;
invasive pain procedures*



"So, Mr. Fenton . . . Let's begin with your mother."

The Purpose of a Neuropsych IME

- **Goal:** to provide relevant ***cognitive data*** to assist the claim adjudicator in rendering a decision
- **Common referral questions:**

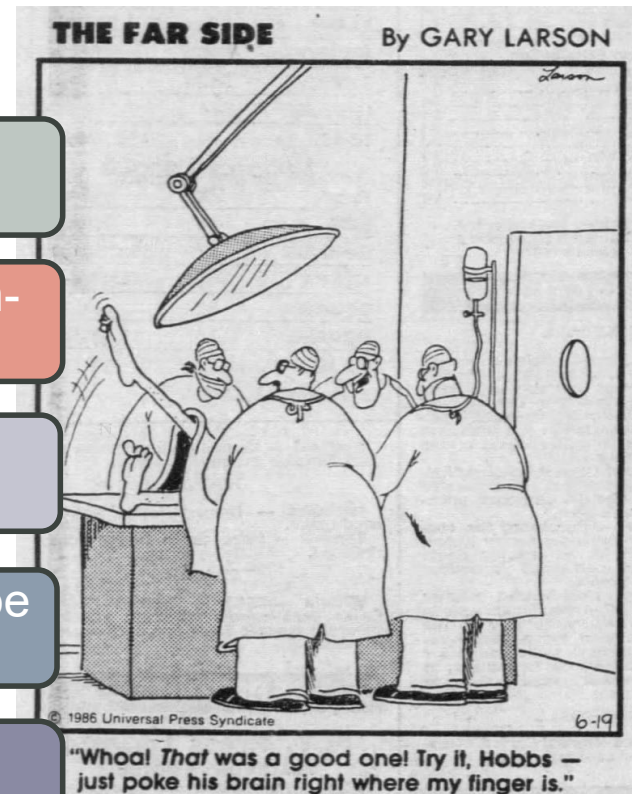
Did a claim-related brain injury occur?

Are there cognitive impairments due to a claim-related brain injury?

Is the claimant able to perform work-related duties?

How can claim-related cognitive impairments be treated?

Are other psychological or cognitive factors impairing a claimant's ability to return to work?



Components of both Psychological and Neuropsychological IMEs

- **Multimethod Approach:**
 - Self-report
 - Direct observation
 - Collateral information
 - **Specific psychological tests****



Components of both Psychological and Neuropsychological IMEs



Detailed clinical interview with claimant

History and Background

Developmental
Educational
Occupational
Medical
Psychiatric
Substance use
Legal

Workplace Injury

Job functioning at time
Treatment and recovery process
Future goals for work
Financial status

Current Functioning

Symptoms, concerns, & impairments
Daily activities
Attitude towards claim/injury/treatment

Psychological Tests in IMEs

- Tests can provide **objective** evidence of the presence of a psychological condition
- **Commonly used tests:**
 - Broadband measures of psychopathology/personality
 - MMPI; PAI; MCMI
 - Symptom inventories
 - BDI; BAI; TSI-2
 - Measures specific to injured patients
 - BHI-2; PCS; ODI

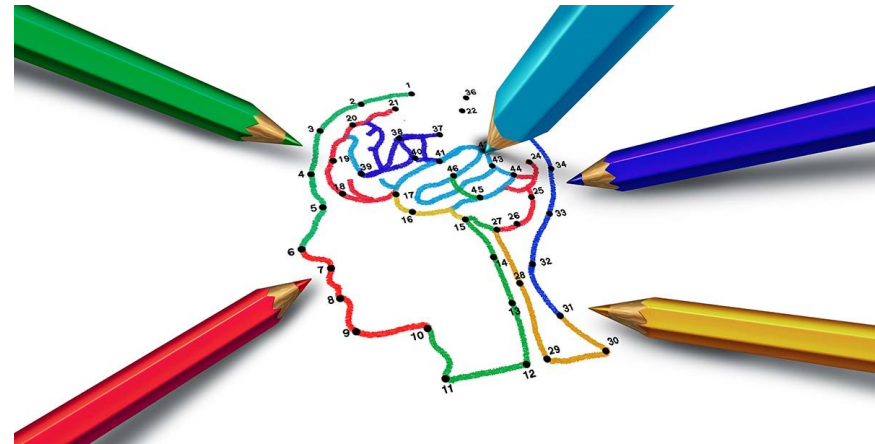


Neuropsychological Tests in IMEs

- Tests can detect cognitive deficits, severity of impairment, and improvement over time
- More extensive and performance-based than basic psych tests

- **Common test areas:**

- Intellectual functioning
- Language
- Attention/working memory
- Processing speed
- Visuospatial abilities
- Executive functioning
- Sensorimotor functioning
- Effort (performance validity)
- Other psych conditions/ personality factors



Assessing Possible Feigning

- Prevalence estimates range from 7-33% in disability evals
- Multiple motivations
- How to detect?
 - Psychological tests:
 - Validity scales in broadband measures
 - Specific tests of malingered psychopathology
 - Specific tests of malingered memory
 - Embedded or stand-alone tests of low cognitive effort

• Reported

• Record



Sample Psychological IME Referral Questions

1. What, if any DSM diagnoses would you assign to the claimant?

2. Are any of the diagnoses attributable to the work injury? If so, explain.

3. Did the work-related injury aggravate any pre-existing conditions?

a) If yes, was the aggravation temporary or permanent?

b) If temporary, has she returned to baseline?

4. Are there any pre-existing psychological or other conditions which affect the claimant's recovery and her perceptions of disability?

5. Are there any specific restrictions for claimant's work activities? If so, what are they?

6. If further treatment is needed, please provide recommendations and estimates of frequency and duration.

7. Is the claimant a good candidate for invasive treatments? Please describe psychological factors that might complicate surgical recovery.



(Cont'd)

Questions? Comments?



Frank started to get a funny feeling that his doctor was a quack.

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