

# Disability Management for Injured Texas Workers



In 2005, the Texas Legislature passed sweeping reforms of the Texas Workers' Compensation system, which now is regulated by the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC).

Central to these reforms is DWC's adoption of disability management rules and the abolishment of the Approved Doctor List (ADL) effective Sept. 1, 2007. Moreover, all physicians who treat injured workers, regardless of past ADL status, now are required to adhere to disability management rules, which are designed to optimize health care and return-to-work outcomes for injured employees. Disability management includes the following three components.

## 1 Treatment Guidelines

(Effective May 1, 2007)

For treatment guidelines, DWC has adopted *Official Disability Guidelines—Treatment in Workers' Comp (ODG)* published by the Work Loss Data Institute. *ODG* provides a list of diagnoses with a corresponding medical treatment. By rule, care provided in accordance with the treatment guidelines is presumed to be necessary and reasonably required. Physicians are required to provide treatment in accordance with these guidelines; otherwise, the treatment requires preauthorization. The list of preauthorized treatments remains in effect. An insurance carrier may not deny preauthorization or reimbursement for a treatment solely because the diagnosis or treatment is not included in DWC's treatment guidelines.

## 2 Return-to-Work Guidelines

(Effective May 1, 2007)

The adopted return-to-work guidelines are found in *The Medical Disability Advisor (MDA)*. *MDA* provides expected disability duration and identifies instances when additional evaluation of the injured employee may be warranted.

## 3 Treatment Planning

(Postponed until the completion of DWC pilot project and rule adoption.)

Only treating doctors are authorized to submit treatment plans; ancillary and referred providers must work with the treating doctor to develop the treatment plan. Treating doctors may bill for development of treatment plans.

Specifically, treating doctors must submit treatment plans to the carrier:

- ▶ When the injured employee's diagnosis is not included in *ODG*; or
- ▶ When the planned care is extended to 60 days after date of injury or the optimum days listed in *MDA* return-to-work guidelines; or
- ▶ As required by the commissioner of the Division of Workers' Compensation.

DWC provides educational resources through the agency Web site at [www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/dm/index.html](http://www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/dm/index.html). For additional information, contact the TMA Knowledge Center at (800) 880-7955.

***"These treatment guidelines are evidence-based, scientifically valid, and outcome-focused. They are designed to reduce excessive or inappropriate medical care while safeguarding necessary medical care. I am confident the use of these treatment guidelines will positively affect health care outcomes for workers' compensation patients."***

Howard Smith, MD, JD, Medical Advisor  
Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation

## REQUIRED GUIDELINES

### *Official Disability Guidelines — Treatment in Workers' Comp*

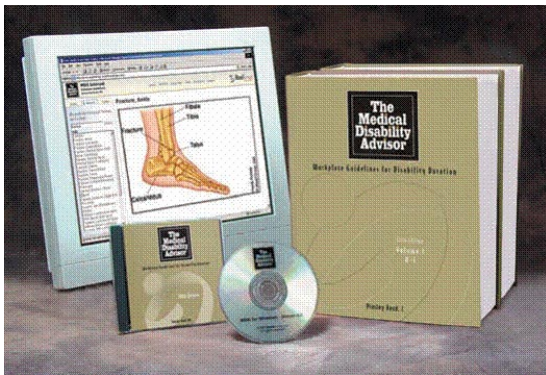
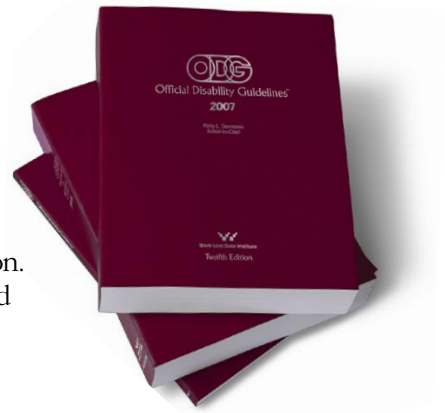
(treatment guidelines)

*ODG* provides evidence-based medical treatment guidelines to improve and benchmark outcomes in workers' compensation and nonoccupational disability. By rule, the online *ODG* is the official version. Texas physicians also are eligible to receive the textbook at a discounted rate.

Available formats:

- ▶ Summaries of *ODG* treatment guidelines by body area are available online free of charge at [www.guideline.gov](http://www.guideline.gov) (enter *ODG* in search box, then choose body area).
- ▶ *ODG* online subscription at \$162.50 (regularly \$325) per user per year.
- ▶ Textbook, three-volume set for \$243.75 (regularly \$325).

For more information and to order, visit [www.worklossdata.com](http://www.worklossdata.com), or call (800) 488-5548.



### *The Medical Disability Advisor, Fifth Edition*

(return-to-work guidelines)

*MDA* is a return-to-work resource that provides a way to manage and measure the time that employees are absent for health-related reasons. The guidelines include updated disability duration data and tables, CPT codes with descriptions, and evidence-based rehabilitation guidelines.

Available formats:

- ▶ *MDA* online subscription at \$197.50 (regularly \$395) per user per year.
- ▶ Textbook, two-volume set for \$347.50 (regularly \$695).
- ▶ Windows CD-ROM for \$347.50 (regularly \$695).

For more information, including a free, 30-day trial, visit [www.MDAinternet.com](http://www.MDAinternet.com).