

# Mississippi State Board of Physical Therapy

## Impairment Ratings Statement

Questions have come to the MS State Board of Physical Therapy regarding the Board's opinion on the ability of physical therapists to participate in the impairment ratings process.

In the State of Mississippi impairment ratings are performed primarily for medical and legal purposes. The **AMA Guides to Evaluation of Permanent Impairment 6<sup>th</sup> Edition** is the text used for this purpose. According to this text, only physicians can *assign* impairment ratings. However, it is the opinion of the Mississippi State Board of Physical Therapy that it is within the scope of physical therapist abilities to review medical records, perform a physical exam, and administer the appropriate questionnaires in order to make recommendations regarding impairment. Ultimately, the physician will assign the impairment rating.

The medical records to be reviewed would include, but are not limited to, surgical reports, clinical studies (X-Rays, MRI's, Nerve Conduction Tests), the initial physician's visit notes and the last two or three physician's office notes. It is outside of the scope of the physical therapist to *assign* a medical diagnosis or to interpret X-Rays, MRI's, Myelograms, arthrograms or other tests. However, it is within the scope of physical therapy to read and review these reports if these reports were created by a qualified physician and/or radiologist. Review of these records and reports are required to perform the task of determining the impairment rating, whether or not the task of performing the impairment rating is done by a qualified physician or physical therapist.

In summary, it is within the scope of the physical therapist to perform the task of making impairment rating recommendations. For the physical therapist to adequately and appropriately provide the impairment rating recommendation, medical records and test results must be obtained. Once these records have been obtained and the physical therapist has reviewed the required documentation, as stated above, it is within the scope of physical therapy to recommend an impairment rating for a particular body part, as well as a whole body, within an appropriate range, using the **AMA Guide to Evaluation of Permanent Impairment 6<sup>th</sup> Edition**. The impairment rating determined by the physical therapist would be a recommendation to the referring physician. The physician can choose to assign or adjust the impairment rating based on the recommendation of the physical therapist.