Book Review

AMA Guides to the Evaluation of Work Ability and Return to Work, Second Edition

By James Talmage, MD, J. Mark Melhorn, MD, Mark H. Hyman, MD

American Medical Association, 2011

Reviewed by David A. Fetter, MD, FAAOS, FAADEP, CEDIR
Diplomate American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery
Fellow American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
Fellow American Academy of Disability Evaluating Physicians
Certification in Impairment and Disability Rating - American Academy of Disability Evaluating Physician

The second edition of “Return to Work,” in one word, is a masterpiece. The authors are to be congratulated for their scientific approach to a topic that at times has nonscientific contributing factors to consider.

The preface to the second edition acknowledges the increasing importance of evidence-based medicine concepts to support physician opinion reports. Today’s health care medical provider is asked on an increasingly frequent basis to issue a report, including an opinion for work return, by insurance adjustors, attorneys, and other third parties, sometimes with little knowledge of complex medical issues. The primary care physician, occupational medicine, physical medicine, orthopedic, neurological surgeons, and other specialists are frequently involved in opining with “reasonable medical probability” and with civil penalties imposed for basing an opinion on “junk science” or only “personal anecdotal experience” if the opinion is contrary to evidence-based medicine concepts. For adjustors, administrative and civil law judges, and others involved in the daily decisions including workers’ compensation and personal injury claims, it is imperative that the medical physician’s opinion withstand Daubert and other legal challenges. It is important that physicians take as much time as required to continually update their knowledge to support their verbal or written opinions with evidence-based medicine concepts (EBM) as referred to throughout the second edition of Return to Work.

A few words the reader can “take home” from Chapter 1 are summarized in a consensus statement by the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons and a policy statement of the American Medical Association: early, safe return to work is in the best interest of our patients.

In closing, I recommend this book to all medical providers, as well as adjustors, attorneys, administrative and civil law judges, and all who are involved in the evaluation, treatment, and disability determination of injured, or reported injured, individuals who are able to perform work. This book is a must.

Visit ama-assn.org/go/workability to review the table of contents and order this publication.