DOCTOR’S ANALYSIS OF LUMBAR SPINE IMPAIRMENT


DRE Lumbar Category II (5% to 8% Impairment of the Whole Person)

Clinical Picture: (1) Clinical history and examination findings are compatible with a specific injury; findings may include significant muscle guarding or spasm observed at the time of the examination, asymmetric loss of range of motion, or nonverifiable radicular complaints, defined as complaints of radicular pain without objective findings; no alteration of the structural integrity and no significant radiculopathy; or (2) individual had a clinically significant radiculopathy and has an imaging study that demonstrates a herniated disk at the level and on the side that would be expected based on the previous radiculopathy, but no longer has the radiculopathy following conservative treatment.

DRE Lumbar Category III (10% to 13% Impairment of the Whole Person)

Clinical Picture: (1) Significant signs of radiculopathy, such as dermatomal pain and/or in a dermatomal distribution, sensory loss, loss of relevant reflex(es), loss of muscle strength or measured unilateral atrophy above or below the knee; impairment may be verified by electrodiagnostic findings; or (2) history of a herniated disk at the level and one the side that would be expected from objective clinical findings, associated with radiculopathy, or individuals who had surgery for radiculopathy but are now asymptomatic.

DRE Lumbar Category IV (20-23% Impairment of the Whole Person)

Clinical Picture: Loss of motion segment integrity defined from flexion and extension radiographs as at least 4.5 mm of translation of one vertebra on another or angular motion greater than 15 degrees at L1-2, L2-3, and L3-4, greater than 20 degrees at L4-5, and greater than 25 degrees at L5-S1; may have complete or near complete loss of motion of a motion segment due to developmental fusion, or successful or unsuccessful attempt at surgical arthrodesis.

This patient had the following initial clinical picture: ____________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

This patient has the following current clinical picture: ____________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

This patient is DRE Lumbar Category ______ with a ______% Impairment of the whole person.

I recommend: Observation          Neuro Consultation      Ortho Consultation    MD Consultation

Doctor’s Signature _______________________________ Date _______________________
Example of DRE Lumbar Category II (AMA Guides, p. 385)

History: 25 year old man, onset of LBP and left thigh pain while lifting. Examination revealed muscle spasm, + SLR on left at 60 degrees, + crossed SLR at 70 degrees, absent left Achilles reflex. Treated with PT, improved, returned to work after 6 weeks.

Current Symptoms: No pain at rest or numbness in the lower extremities 1 year after onset. Able to perform all ADL, some back pain with heavy activity.

Physical Exam: Full ROM L-spine, negative SLR, normal motor and sensory examination.

MRI: Left posterolateral disk herniation L5-S1 (radiographically confirmed is the key)

Impairment Rating: 5% Impairment of the Whole Person

Example of DRE Lumbar Category III (AMA Guides, p. 386)

History: 25 year old man, onset of back and left posterior thigh and leg pain while lifting a heavy package. Initially presented with muscle spasm, + SLR on the left side at 60 degrees, + crossed SLR at 70 degrees, absent left Achilles reflex. PT did not help. Had surgical discectomy 3 months after the injury. Improved and returned to work without restrictions after 4 months of rehab.

Current Symptoms: No pain at rest or numbness in the lower extremities 8 months after injury. Able to do most ADL but complains of back pain with heavy activity.

Physical Exam: Full lumbar ROM, Absent Achilles reflex but otherwise normal motor and sensory, negative SLR.

Impairment Rating: 10% of the whole person.

Example of DRE Lumbar Category IV (AMA Guides, p. 387)

History: 25 year old man, onset of back and left posterior thigh and leg pain after a motor vehicle crash. Initially presented with muscle spasm, + SLR on the left side at 60 degrees, + crossed SLR at 70 degrees, absent left Achilles reflex. Saw DC who did lumbar x-rays including flexion and extension views. DACBR read the films and found 4.5mm of translation of L2 on L3 and described it in his report, including mention of the 20-23% whole person impairment. Improved and was released as MMI after 4 months of treatment.

Current Symptoms: No neurologic complaints, has back pain after heavy activity or with weather changes.

Physical Exam: Mild tenderness to palpation at L2-3, Neurological exam normal, SLR normal, lumbar ROM mildly decreased.

Clinical Studies: Only plain film x-rays showing 4.5 mm of translation of L2 on L3.

Impairment Rating: 20% of the whole person.