

## **Benefits of a Physical Therapist in a DME/IME** **Objective. Defensible. Convenient.**

As a licensed physical therapist, I am writing to highlight the strategic advantages of having a physical therapist present during a DME/IME. There are a multitude of ways a physical therapist can assist a personal injury or Worker's Compensation case.

### **Independent Observation of What Actually Happened**

A physical therapist can document:

- How long the exam lasted
- What tests were performed
- Whether the physical skipped parts of the exam
- Whether the physician appeared to coach, pressure, or mischaracterize responses
- The patient's visible pain behaviors

This can become important later if the defense physician writes a report that differs from what occurred.

### **Medical Understanding of the Testing**

A physical therapist understands:

- Range-of-motion testing
- Orthopedic maneuvers
- Neurological screening
- Gait and functional assessments

Because of their background and training, a physical therapist may notice:

- Improper testing techniques
- Medically invalid conclusions
- Inconsistencies between findings and the physician report

They can help the plaintiff's attorney identify weaknesses in the defense opinion.

### **Protection Against Exaggeration Claims**

Sometimes defense experts argue a plaintiff was "magnifying symptoms", "malingering", or "not cooperating".

A physical therapist observer can help counter that by noting:

- The plaintiff attempted all requested movements
- Pain reactions appeared consistent
- Limitations matched prior treatment records

That can strengthen credibility.

### **Helps preserve evidence for litigation**

If the case goes to deposition or trial, the physical therapist may become a fact witness regarding:

- The conduct of the exam
- Objective observations
- Discrepancies between the exam and report

In some jurisdictions, having a medically trained observer can carry more weight than having only the plaintiff testify about what happened.

### **Emotional and physical support for the injured person**

Some plaintiffs feel intimidated during defense exams, especially in serious injury cases. A physical therapist's presence may:

- Reduce anxiety
- Help ensure communication is accurate
- Discourage overly aggressive examination tactics

### **Useful for catastrophic or complex injuries**

It can be especially valuable when the injuries involve:

- Chronic pain
- Spinal injuries
- Traumatic brain injury
- Mobility limitations
- Functional impairment claims

A physical therapist can better interpret whether the exam fairly assessed real-world limitations.

Please feel free to reach out if you would like to discuss how retaining a physical therapist during a DME/IME can support your current or upcoming cases.

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