

Nevada Workers' Compensation Law Blog

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What Is a Physiatrist?

One type of physician that injured workers commonly encounter is the **physiatrist**, also known as a physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM & R) physician. While the name sounds similar to a psychiatrist, a physiatrist treats physical injuries as opposed to mental or behavioral problems. A surgeon may refer her patient to a physiatrist after a surgery when additional physical therapy is recommended. Or, a physician who sees an injured worker in a clinic setting for the first couple of visits may refer the patient to a physiatrist when it appears that the injury may require more care over several weeks or months.

Physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R), or **physiatry** is a branch of medicine which aims to enhance and restore functional ability and quality of life to those with physical impairments or disabilities. Physiatrists must complete four years of medical school, one year of internship and three years of residency. Physiatrists specialize in restoring optimal function to people with injuries to the muscles, bones, tissues, and nervous system.

A physiatrist who treats an injured worker usually coordinates the medical care if several specialty physicians are required to treat different injured body parts. If surgery has already occurred, or no surgery is necessary, the physiatrist may order physical therapy or may prescribe medication while the patient recovers from his injuries. When the patient is stable and does not need more treatment, the physiatrist may then order a functional capacity evaluation (FCE) to assist him in determining the patient's permanent work restrictions. Finally, the physiatrist tells the adjuster whether the injured worker should be rated for permanent impairment or not.

If you are not satisfied with the physiatrist that is currently treating you for your work injury, you may be entitled to change physicians. [Click here](#) to read more about changing physicians.

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