**AMA Releases Errata for 6th Edition of the “Guides”**

The AMA has just released its first “Corrections and Clarification” document for the 6th Edition of the AMA Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment. The document is lengthy at 54 pages and does a page-by-page, section-by-section update. Many of the updates are simply mathematical or calculation errors. Other clarifications are contextual with only a word changed (ie. Pain to Severe Pain).

In the Spine chapter there were substantial changes to the descriptions of different impairment classes. While the changes could have been as simple as changing an “OR” to an “AND or a “With” to Without, the implications are dramatic. For example, a patient that has a disc herniation **with or without** radiculopathy is very different than a patient that has a disc herniation **with** radiculopathy. The errata also put in writing that which was commented on in the Webinar that I attended. Specifically, that regionalizing ratings of the spine from Whole person to Region would follow the 5th edition rules. That will become particularly helpful as we become challenged by the very large discrepancies in impairment values from the 6th edition when compared to prior editions for nearly all Spine impairments.

From the perspective of a chiropractic physician, there were corrections and clarifications which removed any bias against chiropractors. Statements such as the guides being written “by medical doctors for medical doctors” have been corrected or removed. Of great significance, and noted in prior newsletters, the guides has removed any limitation as to which body parts a doctor of chiropractic can evaluate for impairment. Now, chiropractors can perform impairment rating evaluations to any body part that they have the proper training and experience, as they have in prior editions of the guides.

The reviewers have done a very good job of identifying errors that require correction in this first erratum. That which they have not corrected, and are unlikely to correct in future errata releases, is the significant changes in impairment rating values for similar conditions in prior editions of the guides. We are still faced with non-disc, non-radicular connective tissue injuries that are now rated in the 1%-3% range when they were previously rated in the 5%-8% range. This is a bias that seems to serve the author of the guides in the development of his impairment review service, generally geared to the defense community. As an example of this bias, one of the changes in the errata is the clarification that non-physicians can review impairment ratings by physicians. Interestingly, several of the author’s employees are nurses who do the impairment reviews for his service company.

The entire “Corrections and Clarification” document should become part of your reference library and sit beside your copy of the 6th edition. I still have about 20 copies of the 6th edition available to those attorneys who still don’t own a copy. If you need a copy please let me know. I also have the complete “Corrections and Clarification” document available in PDF format that I can forward to anyone interested. Of course, I could snail mail it to you but it would be best to send it by email. Once in your email you could save it, distribute it, print it or even delete it (if you don’t like it). If you would like me to email you a copy of the “Corrections and Clarification” document please send me an email to info@ShawChiropractic.com with the subject “Please send me the Errata”. I will get it to you as soon as I receive your email. I’ll also forward you additional important information about the guides as releases become available.