

Introduction to the AMA Guides® Sixth 2024 Musculoskeletal Chapters

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Materials and Methods

Goals

First: Revise the evaluation method

The Five Step Process of Impairment Rating

- Step 1.** Confirm a Clinically Relevant Diagnosis (DX)
- Step 2.** Confirm Maximum Medical Improvement (MMI)
- Step 3.** Identify the Relevant Diagnosis-Based Impairment (DBI) Table
- Step 4.** Determine the Diagnostic Row, Class, Grade, and Impairment Value
- Step 5.** Guidelines for Report Documentation

Second:

Develop enhanced DBI tables based on specific individual elements (SIEs) of the clinical history (CH), physical examination (PE), and relevant clinical studies (CS).

Third:

Determine the impact (outcome measures) of the updated method and enhanced DBI tables on the ease of use (e.g., user friendliness), accuracy, consistency, and reliability (interrater and intrarater) of the AMA Guides® Sixth 2024.

Fourth:

To evaluate the potential differences in impairment ratings between the 2008 and 2024 methods, given the potential significant judicial, legislative, and economic implications.

Overview of Chapters 15-17: Upper Limb, Lower Limb, Spine & Pelvis

Independent medical evaluators provide professional opinions on the existence of a permanent medical condition and the extent of functional loss, serving as a baseline for administrative and legal decisions on appropriate compensation.

In Jun. 2019, the American Medical Association (AMA) established the AMA Guides Editorial Panel (Guides Panel) to periodically update all chapters of the AMA Guides, with a focus on improving the measurement of functional loss and impairment based on the latest scientific evidence.

In Aug. 2022, the Guides Panel formed a dedicated musculoskeletal (MSK) subcommittee to address updates for the three musculoskeletal chapters. These updates were developed using the RAND/UCLA Appropriateness Method (RAM) combined with a modified Delphi process.

Results

Study 1



Scan QR code to review each study.



Study 2



Conclusions

Study 1

- 2024 methods allow **for more efficient impairment ratings** while retaining accuracy, consistency, reliability, and reproducibility.
- Intuitive impairment assessment process **reduces training burden** and improves implementation.
- Potential for **cost-benefit savings** to the workers' compensation system compared with AMA Guides 2008 based on improved consistency and ease of use.

Study 2

- 2024 method demonstrates AMA Guides Sixth 2024 results in **no significant impact on the impairment values** when compared to 2008.
- Updates **preserve the integrity and utility of impairment evaluation** while offering advancements in application.
- Additional studies for the lower limb and spine, aimed at the same goals, are currently under review for publication and show similar findings.

Future Research

Future studies should involve the review of additional vignettes by multiple evaluators to further validate the findings.