

What You Need to Know: Carpal Tunnel Syndrome Medical Treatment Guidelines

The New York State Workers' Compensation Board released the Carpal Tunnel Syndrome Medical Treatment Guidelines (CTS MTGs) for use by workers' compensation providers on March 1, 2013 and updated the Guidelines on September 15, 2014.

Carpal Tunnel claims can generate high workers' compensation costs for self-insured employers. It is important to work with your Third Party Administrator to determine whether a carpal tunnel case should be accepted or controverted. These new CTS MTGs provide insight into which claims should be allowed, and which are inappropriate for payment under workers' compensation coverage.

It is specifically noted that the Medical Treatment Guidelines do **NOT** list repetitive typing or data entry as a cause of CTS.

It is noted in the Guidelines that work-related CTS is most often associated with activities requiring extensive, forceful, repeated or prolonged use of the hands and wrist, particularly if these potential risk factors are present in combination (e.g., force and repetition or force and posture). Usually, one or more of the following work conditions occur on a regular basis to support work-relatedness:

1. Forceful use, particularly if repeated
2. Repetitive hand use combined with some element of force, especially for prolonged periods
3. Constant firm gripping of objects
4. Moving or using the hand and wrist against resistance or with force
5. Exposing the hand and wrist to strong regular vibrations
6. Regular or intermittent pressure on the wrist

Since the release of the CTS MTGs, there have been several cases which challenged the above in court. These cases were decided in favor of the employer and are briefly explained below:

- o People Inc. (2015 WL 745839): The claimant's job duties of repositioning, lifting, walking with, and transferring patients and popping pills out of blister packs, filing, computer work, phone use and writing did not include repetitive, prolonged forcible hand use to support establishment. The case was disallowed.
- o Office of Health Central (2014 WL 4772048): The Board Panel credited the IME which applied the CTS MTG and relied on literature in the concluding that typing/clerical work does not contribute to CTS. The case was disallowed.

If you are unsure of whether a claim should be accepted or controverted, talk to your assigned adjuster or contact at NCAComp. The adjuster may decide to send an investigator out to take a written statement from the injured worker. If appropriate, the adjuster may also schedule an Independent Medical Exam to get a doctor's opinion on whether the injury is related to the worker's job duties.

To review a full copy of the CTS MTGs, you can visit the Workers' Compensation Board website at: <http://www.wcb.ny.gov/content/main/hcpp/MedicalTreatmentGuidelines/2014TreatGuide.jsp>