



## The physician search

**O**n-the-job injuries are unexpected, but what can be even more unexpected is the realization that many doctors now refuse to treat the on-the-job injuries of federal employees. Maybe it's the red tape or OWCP's fee schedule, but regardless of their reasons, many physicians are now declining all federal on-the-job injury cases.

So how does an injured worker find a health care provider who is willing to provide treatment to patients under the Federal Workers' Compensation Act (FECA)? Before the Internet, injured workers would either try to find a physician in the yellow pages or get a referral from a friend. Those options are still viable, but they can be time-consuming.

An easier way to find a physician might be to use the "Provider Search" on OWCP's ACS Web Bill Processing Portal website. By using the "Provider Search" feature, an injured worker can easily obtain a list of health care providers who have taken OWCP cases in the past. The list provides the name, address and phone number of the health care provider. It also identifies the health care provider's specialty, if applicable.

The "Provider Search" page is made up of a list of the health care providers who have enrolled with ACS. But, just because a particular health care provider's name or practice is not on the ACS list, it should not be assumed that they refuse OWCP cases. It may be that the health care provider simply has never had occasion to enroll with ACS. The ACS physician listings are updated on a weekly basis, so employees should be assured of receiving the latest information.

The ACS website can be found at: <http://owcp.dol.acs-inc.com/portal/main.do>. Once on that webpage, click on the "Provider Search" link, click "Accept" on the disclaimer, and choose "FECA" under "Select a Program." (The ACS website handles other benefit programs as well, so when given a choice on the ACS website, always choose FECA.) Then select the criteria for a particular search. For instance, you can look for all physicians who take OWCP cases in a certain city. Or a search can be done by ZIP code, by state, by physician specialty, or by any combination of the above.


The ACS website also offers other features worth exploring. An injured worker can find the status of his or her requests for medical authorizations and can find out the specific reason that a certain medical bill was not paid. An injured worker also can verify the specific medical condition(s) that are approved for OWCP benefits.

**Physicians who perform impairment ratings for schedule awards** also can be difficult to find in some areas of the country.

An impairment rating is a percentage estimate of the permanent loss or loss of use (either partial or total) of certain internal organs and members or functions of the body. OWCP requires any physician evaluating permanent impairment to use the *American Medical Association's Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment, Sixth Edition*. But, impairment ratings do not have to be completed by your treating physician.

So how does an injured worker find a physician who performs impairment ratings using the *AMA Guides*? Here are two websites that might be helpful references in that search: [aadep.org/en/member\\_directory/](http://aadep.org/en/member_directory/) and [abime.org/node/19](http://abime.org/node/19).<sup>1</sup> These two organizations say that their member physicians are trained to provide impairment evaluations.

In your search for a physician, you also should remember that the FECA draws very clear distinctions when defining a "physician." The FECA states that physicians include surgeons, podiatrists, dentists, clinical psychologists, optometrists, chiropractors and osteopathic practitioners acting within the scope of their practice as defined by state law.<sup>2</sup> Chiropractors are considered physicians for purposes of the FECA only to the extent that their reimbursable services are limited to treatment consisting of manual manipulation of the spine to correct a subluxation as demonstrated by X-ray to exist and subject to regulation by OWCP.

It also is a good idea to find a physician who treats federal workers with on-the-job injuries before you need a physician. 

1. Websites are cited for reference only. This is not an endorsement.

2. 5 USC 8101.2