

WorkSafeBC medical advisors are here to help

Here's how they can assist you in caring for your injured worker patients

WorkSafeBC medical advisors—uniquely qualified physicians located in 14 offices throughout the province—are a valuable resource for community physicians with injured worker patients, particularly when the patients have prolonged disability or complex clinical or psychosocial issues. Medical advisors do not make decisions on injured worker claims, but may be able to assist physicians in expediting care, considering rehab programs, examining patients, and navigating WorkSafeBC's claim system. They're available by phone, and if the call is to discuss a specific claim, the call is billable to WorkSafeBC.

Here's what you need to know about WorkSafeBC medical advisors and what they have to offer.

What are WorkSafeBC medical advisors' qualifications?

All WorkSafeBC medical advisors are physicians licensed in BC—most with a GP/FP background—with a minimum of 5 years of clinical practice experience. A number hold further certification and specialties, including Canadian Board of Occupational Medicine; diploma of sports medicine; certified independent medical examiner; or a master's in epidemiology, community medicine, or public health. Some are specialist medical or clinical advisors in fields such as occupational medicine, internal medicine, orthopaedics, neurosurgery, psychiatry, ophthalmology, dentistry, chiropractic, or pharmacy. WorkSafeBC medical advisors receive 2 to 3 weeks of in-house training, followed by mentoring for up to 6 months, and clinical updates twice yearly.

What are the main roles of medical advisors?

WorkSafeBC medical advisors have two fundamental roles:

- **Clinical**—to assist attending physicians in accessing expedited evidence-based care, alongside disability management and collaborative clinical care for their injured worker patients.
- **Medicolegal**—to provide opinions and recommendations on issues of medical impairment and disability, cause/etiology, diagnosis, treatment, or prognosis to WorkSafeBC decision-making officers who administer benefits under the Workers Compensation Act.

Do WorkSafeBC medical advisors become the treating physician?

No. WorkSafeBC medical advisors are independent physicians. You remain responsible for your patient's care.

Do medical advisors make decisions on injured worker claims?

No. "Claim owners"—entitlement officers, case managers, or other adjudicating officers—are the decision makers. Their decisions are made after weighing evidence that includes medical opinions from attending physicians and medical advisors, as well as information from forms and consults.

Do medical advisors review all Form 8s and 11s?

No. Medical advisors do not see all claims, nor do they read every physician form that is submitted. Medical advisors are involved in claims that are complex because of clinical, disability, or medicolegal issues, and only when a claim file is referred by a physician or the claim owner.

If you would like to consult a medical advisor, please phone the WorkSafeBC office nearest you and ask to speak to one. Alternatively, tick the request box on your F8 or F11 or make the request in your consult. If you wish, we can also provide, for your personal use, a list of medical advisors and their contact information.

Who should injured workers contact?

Injured workers should contact the claim owner, who is typically a case manager, rather than a medical advisor. The claim owner will be able to answer questions and explain decisions that are made regarding the claim.

Who should physicians contact with questions about clinical care?

Through your local WorkSafeBC office, you can contact one of our clinicians, who include medical advisors (physicians), nurse advisors (occupational in nature and return-to-work experts), and psychology advisors.

Are physicians paid for time on the phone with a WorkSafeBC medical advisor?

If the call is to discuss a specific claim, the medical advisor will give you a billing code and invite you to bill for the time on the phone.

For more information about WorkSafeBC medical advisors, or to talk to one, phone your local WorkSafeBC office or call 604 244-6224, or toll free 1 888 967-5377, local 6224.

—**Celina Dunn, MD, CCFP**
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