



## **Patient Education: What is a PR-4 Exam?**

**What is an Permanent and Stationary/Impairment/PR-4 exam?** An impairment exam is a special visit with the doctor to tell your whole story of your injury to the insurance carrier. Sometimes this exam report is called a “Permanent and Stationary Report “(P & S), an “Impairment Report” or a “PR-4” report. The answers questions about your work injury, and the exam is important to distribute the future benefits of your claim.

**Does this mean my case will be closed?** An impairment exam means your doctor has decided that all useful and reasonable treatment for your problem has been completed. The report is used to tell the insurance carrier what type of care you will need in the future to help you feel your best. This section in the report is called “Future Medical Care”. Future Medical Care may include ongoing access to physical therapy, certain medications, or medical procedures like surgery.

**What if I still have pain? I am afraid that I cannot return to my job.** The impairment report will tell your employer and insurance carrier about your ability to return to work. This opinion will include what you can and cannot do at work. The report will take into account your pain/symptoms, the physical exam findings, and any tests or studies that have been performed during your care. If the doctor determines you have ongoing work restrictions as a result of your injury, these restrictions will now be called “Permanent Functional Restrictions”.

**What if I am unhappy with my impairment report findings or disagree with the doctor?** Workers’ Compensation injuries can be complicated. Your pain and symptoms must be considered along with the findings of your physical exam and any tests performed. If a finding on the exam is unclear or does not make sense to you, consider first talking to your evaluating doctor at the exam. If your questions still remain, it is recommended you then speak with your insurance adjuster, or designated employer representative. Finally, you may consider seeking a second opinion in the “Panel Qualified Medical Examiner” system, sometimes called a “QME”.

**What is a QME?** The letters “QME” stand for "[Qualified Medical Examiner](#)". To become a QME, the doctor, or health professional, must pass a state written examination to demonstrate competency in the basic rules and regulations of California’s Workers’ Compensation system. Upon completion of this test, the doctor or health professional is now certified to perform independent evaluations to help injured workers and insurance carriers answer questions that may be delaying the claim. Injured workers or their insurance carriers may request a QME exam for purposes of a second opinion. For more information on the QME system you may contact the [California Division of Workers’ Compensation](#) (DWC).