

## **EMG as the Practice of Medicine Talking Points**

### **Needle EMG is the practice of medicine:**

- Clinical diagnostic (i.e., needle) electromyography (EMG) is a unique, invasive procedure during which the physician inserts an electrode into a patient's muscles to diagnose the cause of muscle weakness.
- Diagnosis is the differentiation of one disease from another and is the practice of medicine.

### **Only medical doctors are properly trained to diagnose potentially serious disease:**

- Physical therapists are trained in therapy, not diagnosis.
- Needle EMG/NCS is a diagnostic procedure, not a method of treatment.
- The report of the needle EMG/NCS procedures contains only the audio, visual and tactile observations of the examiner.
- There is no way from the report alone to verify the accuracy of the findings. There is no way for these studies to be performed by a technician and then later "read" or "interpreted" by a physician, as is the case with EEG, MRI, or EKG.

### **Doctors receive years – not hours – of training in diagnostic procedures:**

- Physicians complete 4 years of medical school and a 4-year residency in specialty training.
- In this lengthy process, neurologists and rehabilitative physicians master the skill of diagnosing neuromuscular conditions.
- In contrast, physical therapists receive training in EMG measured in hours, not months or years.

### **Accurate diagnoses means better patient care:**

- The needle EMG/NCS procedures allow appropriately trained physicians to distinguish a range of conditions – from carpal tunnel syndrome to Lou Gehrig's disease.
- For patients with neuromuscular disorders and work-related traumatic nerve injuries, accurate needle EMG/NCS performed by trained specialty physicians is essential to the diagnosis and treatment of these serious conditions.
- A misdiagnosis of a neuromuscular disorder and nerve injury may result in significant delay of necessary treatment, including surgery, and loss of quality of life. Misdiagnosis can also result in unnecessary treatment.
- Therefore, the performance of these procedures should reside solely with appropriately trained physicians.

### **What non-physicians can do safely:**

- Surface EMG for the purpose of measuring muscle repair within a prescribed treatment regimen may fall within the appropriate scope of physical therapy, provided that no diagnostic impression is made by the PT or communicated to the patient.
- Prescribed treatment regimens, under the supervision of trained physicians, enable non-physicians like PTs to perform within the appropriate limits of their training.