

Cross-Examination of a Functional Capacity Evaluation

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- I. The Functional Capacity Evaluation [FCE]
 - A. Purpose: to determine an individual's ability to safely perform the physical demands of a job.
 - B. The relevant physical demands tested are determined by requirements in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles [DOT]¹
 1. Formally assessed²
 - a. Strength Demands
 - i. Lifting
 - ii. Carrying
 - iii. Pushing
 - iv. Pulling
 - v. Standing
 - vi. Walking
 - vii. Sitting
 - b. Climbing
 - c. Balancing
 - d. Stooping
 - e. Kneeling
 - f. Crouching
 - g. Crawling

- h. Reaching
- i. Handing
- j. Fingering
- k. Feeling

2. Informally Tested or Indirectly Assessed; May require additional assessment if deficit becomes apparent.

- a. Talking
- b. Hearing
- c. Tasting/smelling
- d. Near Visual Acuity
- e. Far Visual Acuity
- f. Depth Perception
- g. Accommodation - ability to change visual focus
- h. Color vision
- i. Field of vision

C. Definition of Work Intensity and Frequency¹

- 1. Strength Demands - material handling tasks are rated as follows:
 - a. Sedentary - exerting up to 10 pounds of force occasionally, mostly sitting.
 - b. Light - exerting up to 20 pounds of force occasionally. Significant walking or standing.
 - c. Medium - 20 to 50 pounds of force occasionally, 25 to 50 pounds frequently, 10 to 20 pounds constantly.
 - d. Heavy - 50 to 100 pounds of force occasionally, 25 to 50 pounds frequently, 10 to 20 pounds constantly.

e. Very heavy - 100 pounds of force occasionally, 50 pounds of force frequently, 20 pounds of force constantly.

2. Frequency Demands - Position and Mobility. Demands are noted as follows:

a. Never - not required in workday.

b. Occasionally - required one-third of workday.

c. Frequently - required 1/3 to 2/3 of workday.

d. Constantly - required 2/3 or more of workday.

D. Definitions for Evaluations of the Assessment³

1. Reliability - consistency of a measure. Without consistency, different evaluations may obtain widely divergent results.

a. Inter-rater reliability - ability to obtain similar scores when assessment is administered by different examiners

b. Intra-rater or test-retest reliability - consistency of an evaluation performed by same examiner at different points in time.

2. Validity - accuracy of the assessment. Does the assessment truly determine physical work abilities that were intended to be measured?

a. Content validity - the extent to which the assessment covers all variables in question. Judged by DOT standards.

b. Criterion - related validity - comparison of an FCE assessment method with a gold standard.

i Construct validity - ability to assess on abstract clinical theory in absence of gold standard.

ii Concurrent validity - ability to determine current abilities.

iii Predictive validity - ability to determine future abilities.

E. Problems of FCEs

1. No gold standard.
2. Lack of standardization of assessments
 - a. Clinically developed assessments
 - i. No reliability measures
 - ii. No validity measures
3. Over 55 different FCEs⁴
 - a. Limited evidence for validity or reliability.
 - b. Only 2 assessments have peer-reviewed studies on reliability.
 - i. Reliability
 - aa. Ergo Science's Physical Work Performance Evaluation (PWPE)
 - bb. West - EPIC/Cal - FCP
 - ii. Validity
 - aa. Ergo Science PWPE - see www.ergoscience.com

F. What FCEs Do Not Measure⁵

1. Sincerity of Effort of Examinee
 - a. Waddell's signs - not developed for determining secondary gain effect.⁶
 - b. No standardization.
2. Mental abilities
 - a. Requires neuropsychological exam.

3. Effects of prescription drugs on performance
4. Ability in real world workplace
 - i Uneven terrain
 - ii Cold and heat tolerance
 - iii Full forty hour work week
 - Attempts to correlate but no standardization
5. Job market

II. Cross Examination

A. Focus on qualification of examiner

1. Certified or licensed physical therapist
2. Did reporter actually observe the client
 - a. Degree of judgment involved - how much delegated?
3. Training in assessments

B. Focus on the FCE administered

1. Importance of standardization in science
 - a. Compare to national tests (SATs)
2. Lack of standardization in FCEs
 - a. Different evaluations may reach different results.
3. Lack of published literature on particular FCE performed
 - a. A different FCE could yield different results
4. Lots of disagreement in the field

C. Recommended Question⁷

1. Did you follow a standardized protocol when administering the FCE?
2. If so, is it a protocol that you developed or is it a commercially available one you have purchased?
3. Show me a copy of the FCE's procedure manual
4. Did you use any formulae for extrapolation from brief periods of testing to the 8 hour day?
5. Is there any research that supports the reliability of the FCE you administered?
6. If so, show me the peer-reviewed publications that describe the research.

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1. U.S. Department of Labor, Dictionary of Occupational Titles (4th ed. 1977). Available at www.jist.com.
 2. D. Lechner, "Functional Capacity Evaluation" Chapter 11 Sourcebook of Occupational Rehabilitation [Plenum Press, N.Y.] (1998)
 3. E. Innes and L. Straken, "Validity of Work-Related Assessments" (1998)
 4. See American Physical Therapy Assoc., "Guidelines for Functional Capacity Evaluation"; Social Security Practice Guide, Chapter 14: Functional Capacity Evaluations.
 5. D. Lechner, et al. "Detecting Sincerity of Effort: A Summary of Methods and Approaches" 78:8 Physical Therapy (August 1998).
 6. D. Lechner, "Reliability and Validity of Functional Capacity Testing," Presented to Georgia Trial Lawyers Association (September 19, 2001) Seminar, "What Attorneys Need to Know About." Materials available at GTLA (404) 522-8487, www.gtla.org.