

No. 2019 5961

OFFICIAL ORDER
of the
TEXAS COMMISSIONER OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Date: MAY 13 2019

Subject Considered:

WILLIAM W. HOWELL, D.C.
10611 Garland Road, Suite 115
Dallas, Texas 75218

CONSENT ORDER
TDI-DWC ENFORCEMENT FILE NO. 16496

General remarks and official action taken:

The commissioner of workers' compensation (commissioner) considers whether disciplinary action should be taken against William W. Howell, D.C. (Dr. Howell).

WAIVER

Dr. Howell acknowledges that the Texas Labor Code and other applicable laws provide certain rights. Dr. Howell waives all of these rights and any other applicable procedural rights in consideration of the entry of this consent order.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The commissioner makes the following findings of fact:

1. Dr. Howell holds Texas Doctor of Chiropractic License No. 06552, which was issued by the Texas Board of Chiropractic Examiners on January 16, 1995.
2. Dr. Howell is a designated doctor (DD) in the Texas workers' compensation system. Dr. Howell is certified to rate maximum medical improvement (MMI) and assign impairment ratings (IRs). Dr. Howell was first certified as a DD, to rate MMI, and to assign IRs on July 30, 2015. Dr. Howell's certification as a DD, to rate MMI, and to assign IRs will expire on October 24, 2019. Dr. Howell has identified Genesis Medical Management Solutions as his administrative services company and Genesis IME as his billing agent since November 3, 2014.
3. Dr. Howell was not selected to be tiered in the 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, or 2017 Performance Based Oversight (PBO) assessments.

MEDICAL QUALITY REVIEW NO. 18-26-DD

4. The Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC), as authorized by TEX. LAB. CODE §§ 414.002 and 408.1225(b), monitors DDs to determine compliance with the Texas Workers' Compensation Act and rules promulgated by the commissioner.
5. Pursuant to the requirements of TEX. LAB. CODE §§ 413.0511 and 413.0512, DWC's Medical Advisor and Medical Quality Review Panel conducted an audit-based medical quality review (MQR No. 18-26-DD) of 10 cases in which Dr. Howell conducted DD examinations of injured employees. The purpose of the audit was to evaluate the medical necessity and appropriateness of additional testing or a referral by Dr. Howell to resolve a question at issue in each examination.

SUBMITTING UNNECESSARY REFERRALS OR ORDERING UNNECESSARY TESTING

6. Dr. Howell submitted unnecessary referrals to other health care providers or ordered unnecessary testing of an injured employee as part of a DD examination in 100% of cases examined (10 out of 10).

FAILURE TO FILE DD REPORT IN THE FORM AND MANNER REQUIRED BY DWC

7. Dr. Howell failed to explain in the DD report why additional testing or a referral was necessary to resolve the question at issue in 100% of cases examined (10 out of 10).
8. Dr. Howell failed to sufficiently explain how he determined the answer to each question within a reasonable degree of medical probability in 10% of cases examined (1 out of 10).

ASSESSMENT OF SANCTION

9. Submitting unnecessary referrals to other health care providers, or performing unnecessary testing of an injured employee, or both, as part of a DD examination imposes extraneous medical costs on the workers' compensation system and delays the completion of the DD's report in the form and manner that is required by DWC.
10. Failure to file a DD report in the form and manner required by DWC increases the likelihood of disputes and hinders the ability of DWC and system participants to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.
11. In assessing the sanction for this case, DWC appropriately and fully considered the following factors set forth in TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021(c) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(e):
 - the seriousness of the violation, including the nature, circumstances, consequences, extent, and gravity of the prohibited act;

- the history and extent of previous administrative violations;
 - the demonstrated good faith of the violator, including actions taken to rectify the consequences of the prohibited act;
 - the penalty necessary to deter future violations;
 - whether the administrative violation has negative impact on the delivery of benefits to an injured employee;
 - the history of compliance with electronic data interchange requirements;
 - other matters that justice may require, including but not limited to:
 - PBO assessments;
 - the promptness and earnestness of actions to prevent future violations;
 - self-report of the violation;
 - the size of the company or practice;
 - the effect of a sanction on the availability of health care; and
 - evidence of heightened awareness of the legal duty to comply with the Texas Workers' Compensation Act and DWC rules; and
 - to the extent reasonable, the economic benefit resulting from the prohibited act.
12. In assessing the sanction for this case, DWC found the following factors set forth in TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021(c) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(e) to be aggravating: the seriousness of the violation, including the nature, circumstances, consequences, extent, and gravity of the prohibited act; the penalty necessary to deter future violations; and evidence of the heightened awareness of the legal duty to comply with the Texas Workers' Compensation Act and DWC rules.
13. In assessing the sanction for this case, DWC found the following factors set forth in TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021(c) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(e) to be mitigating: the history and extent of previous administrative violations; other matters that justice may require, including the size of the company or practice and the promptness and earnestness of actions to prevent future violations.
14. Dr. Howell acknowledges that DWC and Dr. Howell communicated regarding the relevant statutes and rules violated; the facts establishing that the administrative violation occurred; and the appropriateness of the proposed sanction, including how DWC considered the factors under TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021(c) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(e).
15. Dr. Howell acknowledges that in assessing the sanction, DWC considered the factors set forth in TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021(c) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(e).

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The commissioner makes the following conclusions of law:

1. The commissioner has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE §§ 401.021, 402.001, 402.00111, 402.00114, 402.00116, 402.00128, 408.0041, 408.1225, 413.002, 413.044, 413.0511, 413.0512, 414.002, 415.021, and 415.0215; 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26; and TEX. GOV'T CODE §§ 2001.051 – 2001.178.

2. The commissioner has authority to informally dispose of this matter as set forth herein under TEX. GOV'T CODE § 2001.056, TEX. LAB. CODE §§ 401.021, 402.00128(b)(7), and 415.034, and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(h)-(i).
3. Pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021, in addition to any sanction, administrative penalty, or other remedy authorized by this subtitle, the commissioner of workers' compensation may assess an administrative penalty against a person who commits an administrative violation.
4. Pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE § 408.0231(f)(7), the commissioner may impose sanctions against a doctor who commits an administrative violation, including mandatory participation in training classes.
5. Pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.003(3), a health care provider commits an administrative violation if the person makes an unnecessary referral.
6. Pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.003(5), a health care provider commits an administrative violation if the person violates a commissioner rule.
7. Pursuant to 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 127.220(a)(7), DD narrative reports must be filed in the form and manner required by DWC and at a minimum summarize any additional testing conducted or referrals made as part of the evaluation and explain why the testing or referral was necessary to resolve a question at issue in the examination.
8. Dr. Howell violated TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.003(5) each time he filed a DD report that failed to explain why the testing or referral was necessary to resolve a question at issue in the examination.
9. Pursuant to 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 127.220(a)(3), DD narrative reports must be filed in the form and manner required by DWC and at a minimum sufficiently explain how the DD determined the answer to each question within a reasonable degree of medical probability.
10. Dr. Howell violated TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.003(5) each time he filed a DD report that failed to sufficiently explain how he determined the answer to each question within a reasonable degree of medical probability.
11. Pursuant to 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 127.210(a)(5), the commissioner may sanction a DD for submitting unnecessary referrals to other health care providers.
12. Pursuant to 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 127.210(a)(6), the commissioner may sanction a DD for ordering or performing unnecessary testing of an injured employee as part of a DD's examination.

13. Dr. Howell violated TEX. LAB. CODE §§ 415.003(3) and (5) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE §§ 127.210(a)(5) and (6) each time he submitted unnecessary referrals to other health care providers or ordered or performed unnecessary testing or both of an injured employee as part of his DD examination.

ORDER

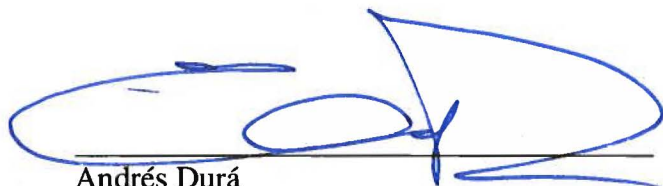
William H. Howell, D.C. is ORDERED:

To be removed from the Texas workers' compensation system's designated doctor list. William H. Howell, D.C. shall no longer participate, in or out of state, as a designated doctor in the Texas workers' compensation system, and shall not apply for certification as a designated doctor in the Texas workers' compensation system for two years from the date of this Order.



Cassie Brown *NTD*
Commissioner of Workers' Compensation

Approved as to Form and Content:



Andrés Durá
Staff Attorney, DWC Enforcement
Texas Department of Insurance

COUNTY OF Dallas §
§

Before me, the undersigned authority, personally appeared the affiant, William H. Howell, D.C., who being by me duly sworn, deposed as follows:

"My name is William H. Howell, D.C. I am of sound mind, capable of making this statement, and have personal knowledge of these facts, which are true and correct.

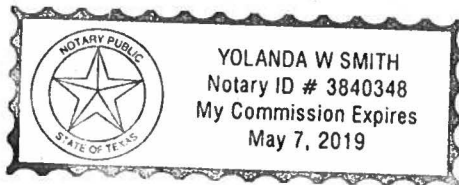
I waive rights provided by the Texas Labor Code and other applicable law and acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Texas commissioner of workers' compensation.

I knowingly and voluntarily enter into the foregoing consent order and agree with and consent to the issuance and service of the same by the commissioner of workers' compensation of the State of Texas."

William W. Howell, D.C.
Affiant

SWORN TO AND SUBSCRIBED before me on March 1, 2019.

(NOTARY SEAL)



Yolanda W. Smith
Signature of Notary Public

YOLANDA W. Smith
Printed Name of Notary Public

My commission expires: May 7, 2019