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AAN POSITION STATEMENT
DIAGNOSTIC ELECTROMYOGRAPHY IS THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE

The American Academy of Neurology (AAN), representing over 18,000 neurologists and neuroscientists, supports policy measures that ensure the highest quality, safety and cost-effectiveness in the performance of needle electromyography (EMG).

Clinical needle electromyography (EMG) is an invasive medical procedure during which the physician inserts an electrode into a patient's muscles to diagnose the cause of muscle weakness. Needle EMG allows physicians to distinguish a wide range of conditions, from carpal tunnel syndrome to ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease).

Needle EMG is also an integral component of the neurological examination that cannot be separated from the physician's evaluation of the patient. The test is dynamic and depends upon the visual, tactile, and audio observations of the examiner. There is no way for physicians to independently verify the accuracy of reports performed by non-physicians.

Misdiagnosis can mean delayed or inappropriate treatment (including surgery) and diminished quality of life. Because needle EMG is strictly diagnostic, the procedure clearly and exclusively falls within the practice of medicine.

The AAN supports working through regulatory and legislative channels to define this procedure as the practice of medicine. Such definition would help ensure the highest standards patient care, patient safety and cost-effectiveness in the performance of diagnostic EMG. The AAN also opposes efforts by non-physician organizations that seek to broaden their scope of practice to encompass the performance of needle EMG.

Policymakers and payers play a vital role in protecting patients and upholding healthcare quality. The American Academy of Neurology serves as a resource for lawmakers and health plans on these complex procedures and their role in safe, quality patient care.

Approved:
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