

To: Miss S Mauritzon  
C/o xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx.xxx

DWP Business Management Team  
Health & Disability Assessments (Operations)  
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13 March 2013

Dear Miss Mauritzon

**Freedom of Information Act – Request for Information**  
**Our Reference: FOI 0441**

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request which we received on 29 January 2013. I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

You asked: *In relation to claims for Employment and Support Allowance.*

1. Could you please provide the relevant "Guidelines for the Disability Analyst" for the following conditions.
  - a. Migraine
  - b. Trigeminal neuralgia and facial pain
  - c. Vasovagal syncope
  - d. Facet joint degeneration
  - e. Hypothyroidism
  - f. Depression
  - g. Anxiety
  - h. Gastroesophagol reflux disease (GERD)
2. If such Guidelines do not exist for any of the above conditions, please clarify the reason for this.
3. Please clarify the process for review of these documents to take into account updated medical knowledge and developments, and whether any independent parties not employed by ATOS or the DWP are involved in the drafting of these advice and guidelines documents.
4. Please confirm if any patients organisations were consulted in the drafting of these documents, and if so, who?

In response to **Qs 1 & 2** Atos Healthcare do not produce guidelines for Healthcare Professionals (HCP) on all medical conditions, Evidence Based Medicine (EBM) protocols have been produced on a number of medical conditions which are grouped under the following major topics of Cardio, Mental Health, Musculoskeletal, Neurological and Infections. Of the conditions mentioned please find attached the EBM protocols for Depression and Anxiety. For other conditions, Atos Healthcare state that HCPs are advised to look at the Logic integrated Medical Assessment Repository, consult text books or internet, or discuss with colleagues. The other conditions mentioned fall into that domain.

These requested documents have been produced as part of a programme for approved HCPs to carry out medical assessments. All HCPs undertaking these medical assessments must be registered medical or nursing practitioners who in addition, have undergone training in disability assessment medicine and more specific training. The training includes theory training in a classroom setting, supervised practical training, and a demonstration of understanding as assessed by quality audit. These documents must be read with the understanding that, as experienced medical or nursing practitioners, the HCPs will have detailed knowledge of the principles and practice of diagnostic techniques and therefore such information is not contained in these documents. In addition, these are not stand-alone documents, and form only a part of the training and written documentation that a HCP receives. As disability assessment is a practical occupation, much of the guidance also involves verbal information and coaching. Thus, although the documents may be of interest to non-medical readers, some of the information may not be readily understood without background medical knowledge and an awareness of the other training and guidance given to HCPs.

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In answer to **Qs 3 & 4** before any decision is made about the drafting of new material, Atos Healthcare are guided by requests from the DWP and suggestions from within Atos Healthcare, and by a review of dialogue with welfare rights and claimant representative groups.

EBM protocols are subject to a 3-yearly review process. These reviews consider updated medical knowledge and developments. The Department, Atos and external experts are all involved in the review process. Representative groups and their clinical advisers are routinely asked to contribute to the review process, which follows a recommendation in Professor Harrington's second independent review of the WCA that was conducted in 2011.

Yours sincerely

DWP Business Management Team  
Health & Disability Assessments (Operations)

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If you are not happy with this response you may request an internal review by e-mailing [freedom-of-information-request@dwpgsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwpgsi.gov.uk) or by writing to DWP, Central FoI Team, Caxton House, Tothill Street, London SW1H 9NA. Any review request should be submitted within two months of the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office for a decision. Generally the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted our own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)