

Optimize Your Claim with Experienced MD Review

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January 2026

Special Newsletter for

Personal Injury

Attorneys

**This Month's Question:**

## Is a Glove-Like Distribution of Hand Symptoms Always Suggestive of Non-Physiologic Complaints?

### GO MD Review Answer:

We were recently asked to consult on an extremely interesting case in which IME doctors opined that the client was malingering, and we provided evidence from the medical literature that the client's symptoms were organic and could be well explained.

This is a case of a 34-year-old woman who was rear-ended while stopped at a red light. The client's car was hit with considerable force, and the offending vehicle was traveling at a high rate of speed and made no effort to brake or stop.

The client was properly restrained with a shoulder and lap belt. Immediately after the auto crash, the client complained of pain in her neck, shoulders, and lower back. X-rays taken in the Emergency Department after the accident showed no evidence of fractures.

The client immediately reported numbness in both hands; her grip was diminished, and she felt "clumsy." The client complained of frequently dropping objects and feeling her hands were often "falling asleep." Cervical MRI was within normal limits. The client reported her hand symptoms to be in a glove-like distribution.

In an IME report, the evaluating physician opined that the client was either malingering or driven by secondary gain, particularly because of the glove-like distribution of the client's symptoms. **Glove-like distributions are most often associated with non-physiologic complaints.**

A neurologic consult was obtained by the client's treating physician, which showed increased cutaneous sensitivity for pinprick and vibration. Light touch and pinprick of the posterior scalp, neck, and right shoulder were significantly decreased.

Strength testing revealed decreased strength in both hands, with significant weakness. In addition, the client complained of severe pain with neck movement and headaches.

We had consulted on one other similar case. After doing the research for both cases it was our opinion the client had Fourth Thoracic Syndrome and directed the client's treating doctors and the IME doctor to a paper titled Clinical Presentation, Quantitative Sensory Testing, and Therapy of 2 Patients with Fourth Thoracic Syndrome, Mellick and Mellick, Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics, Volume 29, Issue 5, June 2006, Pages 403–408. **Patients with this syndrome present with paresthesias in all digits of the hands, glove-like numbness of the hands and forearms, hand weakness and clumsiness, upper extremity coldness, tightness, and aching pain, as well as headaches.**

These patients can be treated with injections of steroids/ local anesthetics with very good results, limiting symptoms or significantly decreasing the severity of symptoms.

When your clients present with the above constellation of symptoms, including glove-like distribution in the hands, treating doctors should at least consider **Fourth Thoracic Syndrome**.

## **ALLOW ME TO OPTIMIZE YOUR CLAIM'S POTENTIAL**

- \* Assessment of Case Validity and Value**
- \* Determination of Future Medical Care**
- \* Assistance with Strategies to Promote Medical Theories & Causation**
- \* Medical Summary Reports for Settlement Letters**
- \* Medical Research and Delivery of Medical Journal Articles**
- \* Answering Specific Medical Questions**

**\* Interpretation of Meaning, or lack thereof, of Medical Reports & Records**

**\* Standard of Care Reviews**

**\* Deposition & Trial Question Preparation**

**\* Facilitation of Communication with Clients, Families & Professionals**

**\* IME Observation & IME Rebuttal Reports**

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Best regards,

Joe Schifilliti MD, MJ

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