



Support legislation defining
ELECTRODIAGNOSTIC STUDIES
as the practice of medicine to improve:

Quality. Safety. Cost.

Patients Deserve Quality Electrodiagnostic Care from a Physician



What are Electrodiagnostic Studies?

Electrodiagnostic (EDX) studies are used by physicians, mainly neurologists and physical medicine and rehabilitation physicians (physiatrists), to diagnosis patients by studying the flow of electrical signals through the muscles and nerves. EDX studies are dynamic and interactive and require the knowledge physicians acquire in medical school and residency programs.

There are two main types of studies:

Nerve conduction studies (NCSs)

An NCS shows how well the body's electrical signals are traveling to a nerve. This is accomplished by applying small electrical shocks to the nerve and recording how the nerve works. These shocks cause a quick, mild tingling feeling. Several nerves may be tested over the course of a study.



Needle electromyography (needle EMG)

A needle EMG requires the insertion of a small, thin needle into several muscles to evaluate how the nerves are functioning. The needle translates the amount and intensity of the electrical activity within the muscle into waveforms displayed on a computer screen and emitted as sound. The physician uses both the visual images and the sound emitted to interpret the data and make a diagnosis.

Who is referred for these studies?

Patients are often referred for complaints such as numbness, tingling, pain, weakness, or muscle cramping; often their physician—based on the history and physical examination of the patient—is concerned that the patient's muscles and nerves may not be functioning properly. Visit the AANEM website for more detailed information.

Types of disorders and diseases diagnosed using needle EMG and NCSs:

Needle EMGs and NCSs are used to diagnose patients with a wide range of muscle and nerve disorders including:

- ◆ Carpal tunnel syndrome
- ◆ Guillan-Barré syndrome
- ◆ Incontinence problems in the pelvic region
- ◆ Lou Gehrig's disease - amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)
- ◆ Motor neuron disease in the throat and tongue
- ◆ Myasthenia gravis
- ◆ Neuromuscular junction or myopathic disorders near the eyes
- ◆ The location of lung-related defects in the diaphragm

Support Legislation That Will Ensure Quality Care and Protect Patients

BACKGROUND The diagnosis of illnesses ranging from carpal tunnel syndrome to amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease) frequently requires specialized tests such as electromyography and nerve conduction studies (NCSs), commonly referred to as electrodiagnostic (EDX) studies. When performed by a physician, these tests provide accurate, timely diagnoses. However, in many states, nonphysicians are performing these tests, diminishing the quality of patient care while wasting health care dollars on inadequate services. Adding to the confusion, some state licensing boards have created conflicting rules defining who can perform EDX studies.

ACTION NEEDED Legislation is required to define who is qualified to perform EDX studies. You can help by supporting legislation that defines the performance and interpretation of EDX studies as the practice of medicine. Similar legislation has been passed in several states, and has been introduced in others. The AANEM is seeking to work with you to support legislation in your state. We will assist legislators by providing resources such as legislation used in other states, the expertise of local neurologists and physiatrists, and supporting clinical literature.

Legislation defining electrodiagnostic studies as the practice of medicine will improve:

QUALITY It is essential that quality EDX studies are performed to ensure that an accurate diagnosis is reached. Providers who lack the training as an EDX physician receives could easily miss important, but subtle signs that distinguish one disease from another. Physicians specializing in EDX medicine complete 4 years of medical school and a minimum of 4 years in residency training. Many EDX physicians complete a fellowship in EDX medicine. This level of training is necessary to perform quality EDX studies.

SAFETY The results of EDX studies determine treatment and surgical decisions. When a patient receives a poor quality study and is misdiagnosed may result in unnecessary surgery. An inaccurate study may result in a delayed diagnosis such as Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS) costing the patient and family precious time near the end of life.

COSTS As healthcare costs continue to soar, ensuring the performance of quality EDX studies and accurate interpretations curbs these costs by providing an accurate diagnosis in a single consultation. Some nonphysician providers utilize a one-size-fits-all approach and perform the same set of studies on all patients regardless of their clinical symptoms. This approach results in incorrect treatment, repeat testing, and excessive spending.

Please contact the AANEM to take an active role in preserving your constituents' access to quality EDX care.

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ABOUT THE AANEM

The AANEM was founded in 1953 and the membership has grown steadily over the years to over 5000 physicians. The primary goal of the AANEM is to serve physicians who diagnose and treat patients with disorders of muscle and nerve, extend the knowledge of electrodiagnostic (EDX) medicine, and improve the quality of patient care. This is accomplished through programs in education, research, and quality assurance.

The major effort of the AANEM is to increase members' knowledge of the anatomy, neurophysiology, pathophysiology, instrumentation, and procedures necessary to maximize the usefulness of EDX techniques in understanding neuromuscular disorders. This is accomplished through a wide range of AANEM publications and annual didactic programs, symposia, courses, and workshops. The AANEM also seeks to inform its members of both basic and clinical research activities in electrodiagnosis of neuromuscular diseases through its annual meeting sessions, journal and other publications, and educational digital media. In so doing, the AANEM fosters the conduct and enhances the quality of this research.

In addition, an annual examination is given by the American Board of Electrodiagnostic Medicine (ABEM) through which candidates are able to assess their level of competence.

Finally, the AANEM is committed to the development of sound and clinically relevant guidelines through literature review, expert opinion, and consensus of experts in the field.

The AANEM has a seat in the American Medical Association's (AMA) House of Delegates and is a national medical society member of the Specialty and Services Society (SSS) of the AMA.



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