

Guardian Underwriting Unwrapped

“But My Doctor Says I’m Fine.”

You may feel like you’ve heard this too many times from a client when you told them we had decided to rate, issue an exclusion or even decline their application for a disability insurance (DI) policy. If what the applicant’s doctor says is true, then why would we decline, or issue a modified policy?

Serious medical histories such as heart attacks, strokes and many forms of cancer put us in a position where we can’t offer any coverage, but others will allow us to make an offer of coverage with some form of modification, such as a rating or exclusion.

Our high-quality individual disability income insurance is medically underwritten so you should be aware that there are major differences between the way a personal physician or medical specialist and an insurance company physician or underwriter view the same medical information: These differences can create a delicate situation the agent must handle when delivering a modified policy.

From the broadest view, physicians and medical specialists are responsible for the near term well being of their patients, whereas at the insurance company underwriters and insurance physicians have a risk assessment role.

A patient may be deemed “fine” by their physician after a review of symptoms and even diagnosis of a disease. The patient may indeed be “fine,” or perhaps at the current stage of their diagnosis no intervention is yet possible or required, so they are “fine for now.”

Our DI underwriters are tasked with determining if the symptoms or disease has the potential to prevent the applicant from doing their job at any point in the future. In doing this the underwriter has to consider medical history in

conjunction with job duties for each applicant. If a condition is found that has potential for preventing a person from performing the duties of their occupation the underwriter must take adverse action.

When it comes to selling individual disability income insurance it is important to remember that “fine” is a subjective term. Explain to your client that both their physician and the insurance company are correct in their conclusions, discuss risk factors involved in underwriting and the importance of high-quality income protection and the promise it delivers on. Help your client refocus from what isn’t covered to the importance of protecting what they can. Remember:

- Most important is that the client is eligible for coverage — and we offer some of the finest income protection coverage available.
- We offer the most favorable coverage available that falls within our underwriting guidelines.
- Although a Medical Exclusion Rider is usually permanent, in some cases we will consider removing it if:
 - Enough time has gone by that we feel convinced the medical problem will not recur or become aggravated again or
 - The medical problem has been eliminated and
 - The policy has been in effect for at least two years

No agent wants a modified policy for their client, but when handled well with thoughtful explanation, these policies can be easily placed.

Disability income products underwritten and issued by Berkshire Life Insurance Company of America, Pittsfield, MA, a wholly owned stock subsidiary of The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America (Guardian), New York, NY, or provided by Guardian.



The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America New York, NY 10004-4025