

810.14 PERSONAL INJURY DAMAGES - PERMANENT INJURY.

(For medical malpractice cases filed on or after 1 October 2011, use N.C.P.I.-Civil 809.114 and 809.115.)

(This document has an attachment: N.C. Gen. Stat. § 8-46 Mortality Table. Directions for accessing the attachment appear at the end of this document, immediately above the endnotes.)

Damages for personal injury also include fair compensation for permanent injury¹ incurred by the plaintiff as a [proximate result of the negligence] [result of the wrongful conduct] of the defendant. An injury is permanent when any of its effects will continue throughout the plaintiff's life.² These effects may include

[medical expenses]

[loss of earnings]

[pain and suffering]

[scarring or disfigurement]

[(partial) loss (of use) of part of the body]

[(state any other element of damages supported by the evidence)]

to be incurred or experienced by the plaintiff over *his* life expectancy. However, the plaintiff is not entitled to recover twice for the same element of damages. Therefore, you should not include any amount you have already allowed for [medical expenses] [loss of earnings] [pain and suffering] [scarring or disfigurement] [(partial) loss (of use) of part of the body] because of permanent injury.

Life expectancy is the period of time the plaintiff may reasonably be expected to live. [The life expectancy tables are in evidence.] [The court has taken judicial notice of the life expectancy tables.]³ They show

that for

someone of the plaintiff's present age, (*state present age*), *his* life expectancy is (*state expectancy*) years.⁴

In determining the plaintiff's life expectancy, you will consider not only these tables, but also all other evidence as to *his* health, constitution and habits.⁵

N.C. Gen. Stat. § 8-46 Mortality Table found in attached PDF

(The Mortality Table cannot be electronically copied, edited or saved. It can only be printed. To print, do the following: i) open the instruction from the electronic Table of Contents; ii) click on the Instruction References Tab at the top of the right border; iii) after the Instruction References menu opens to the left of the tab, double-click on the NCGS § 8-46 Mortality Table attachment; iv) print the attachment by clicking on the printer icon.)

1 A jury may consider permanent injury as an element of damages where there is sufficient evidence showing that the injury is permanent and that it proximately resulted from the wrongful act. *See Short v. Chapman*, 261 N.C. 674, 682, 136 S.E.2d 40, 46-47 (1964); *Collins v. St. George Physical Therapy*, 141 N.C. App. 82, 84, 539 S.E.2d 356, 358 (2000); *Matthews v. Food Lion, Inc.*, 135 N.C. App. 784, 785, 522 S.E.2d 587, 588 (1999).

2 "Where, however, the injury is *subjective* and of such a nature that laymen cannot, with reasonable certainty, know whether there will be future pain and suffering, it is necessary, in order to warrant an instruction which will authorize the jury to award damages for permanent injury, that there 'be offered evidence by expert witnesses, learned in human anatomy, who can testify, either from a personal examination or knowledge of the history of the case, or from a hypothetical question based on the facts, that the plaintiff, with reasonable certainty, may be expected to experience future pain and suffering, as a result of the injury proven.'" *Gillikin v. Burbage*, 263 N.C. 317, 326, 139 S.E.2d 753, 760-61 (1965) (internal citations and quotation marks omitted); *Littleton v. Willis*, 205 N.C. App. 224, 231-32, 695 S.E.2d 468, 473 (2010) (finding error in trial court's instruction to jury on permanent injury where the plaintiff "did not present any medical expert testimony that [p]laintiff, 'with reasonable certainty, may be expected to experience future pain and suffering, as a result of the injury proven,'" as an instruction on permanent injury would have required jurors to speculate on how long they believed plaintiff's pain would continue

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in the future) (citation omitted).

3 The terms "life expectancy tables" and "mortality tables" are used interchangeably. Ordinarily the "mortality tables" will be in evidence. However, since they are statutory (see N.C. Gen. Stat. § 8-46), "judicial notice" of them may be taken. See *Chandler v. Moreland Chem. Co.*, 270 N.C. 395, 400, 154 S.E.2d 502, 506 (1967); *Rector v. James*, 41 N.C. App. 267, 272, 254 S.E.2d 633, 637 (1979). The annuity tables (see N.C. Gen. Stat. § 8-47) are different and should not be admitted in evidence. As pointed out in *Hunt v. Wooten*, 238 N.C. 42, 76 S.E.2d 326 (1953), the annuity tables have nothing to do with the establishment of life expectancy and it would be error to admit them for this purpose. Where the life expectancy to be determined is that of the plaintiff, his age is to be measured as of the date the jury charge is given.

4 The purpose of the permanent injury instruction "is to compensate the plaintiff for additional future harm that she is expected to experience because of a permanent injury that she suffered as a proximate result of the defendant's conduct." *Nicholson v. Thom*, ___ N.C. App. ___, ___, 763 S.E.2d 772, ___ (2014). In the event that the "decendent is not alive at the time of the trial and [if] Plaintiff did not bring suit for wrongful death," the trial court should not instruct on permanent injury. *Id.* In these circumstances [where the decendent is no longer living and there is no wrongful death claim], this instruction should not be used. *Id.*

5 A failure to include this sentence, or its equivalent, is reversible error. See generally *Kinsey v. Kenly*, 263 N.C. 376, 139 S.E.2d 686 (1965); *Harris v. Atl. Greyhound Corp.*, 243 N.C. 346, 90 S.E.2d 710 (1956).