

Injured Worker Rehabilitation – Core Ideologies

Many times a year I have the opportunity for in depth discussions with medical providers all over the country secondary to the number of clinicians that utilize the OccuCare Web Based Industrial Rehab tools. In these discussions we converse about important items in private practice in regards to treating the workers' compensation patient. These discussions usually have a certain ring about them which includes: what do I need to do to better treat my work comp patients, what is the most important aspect of treating work comp patients, how can I market my program to customers and how do I increase my patient volume?

There are many answers but one of the main answers is and should be a core ideology of any rehabilitation facility that wants to specialize in treating the injured worker. It is to return the injured worker back to work as quickly as possible.



Set up your programming to focus on this core ideology. How do you get the injured worker back to work faster than your competitor? In our national training center we focus on knowing what the physical demands of a client's job are. What do they need to do to go back to full duty work? How much do they need to lift, carry, push, pull, reach, bend, squat and/or climb? Just knowing what these levels are, is not enough.

What distance do they need to carry? What height do they lift to? What distance do they need to reach to? Knowing this information by having one of your staff specialize in job site analysis with a primary goal of gathering these physical demands is an excellent first step in getting the injured worker back to work faster than your competitor.

Having this information can help in many ways. The most important way that it helps is as a treating clinician you are able to establish your return to work goals based on the client's functional needs. It is all about function in the rehabilitation community! Return to work function is an important item to know in the mid to later stages of rehab.

Early on in my tenure at OccuCare Systems and Solutions we did a chart review of an entire month of

Workers' Compensation patients. In this chart review we focused on the long term goals and looked at 175 long term goals from that one month. Only 8% of those long term goals said anything about return to work. Most long term goals focused on musculoskeletal improvements and never referenced what the client needed to do to return to their previous level of function, which was return to work.



Following a complete overhaul of the company's protocol we implemented Job Demands Analysis. This was a program in which a specialist trained in job site analysis would go to an injured employee's job and gather the physical demands for return to work. We then provided the treating therapist and the Dr. with a comprehensive report and digital video of the job. What happened is that the rehab providers of the company started using that information in their long term goals and overall treatment of their patient. We did a follow up study one year later and looked at 162 long term goals and 48% of them at this time referenced a return to work function.

The treating providers realized the benefit of having this information and our customers realized that with this information we were getting patients back to work quicker than our competitor. This in turn increased our patient volume because the Dr's, employers, and case managers started to suggest that their clients participate in outpatient rehab at OccuCare's outpatient clinics.

Secondly we realized that performing the Job Demands Analysis offered us the opportunity to get to know our industrial market. We were able to go to many companies, provide them a service, and get to know what their needs were in regards to workers' compensation cost reduction. We were able to build many relationships with area employers.

This programming and protocol is offered by OccuCare in a web based format and is trained monthly at our National Research and Training Facility in Pleasant Prairie Wisconsin, dates of upcoming training sessions are listed inside.

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