



Absence Management in Action!

Coordination of Care Results in Timely Surgery

An injured worker was diagnosed with a herniated lumbar disc with nerve impingement requiring a lumbar fusion. Approval was granted under workers' compensation and a surgical date scheduled. Days before the surgery, the adjuster ordered the case manager to contact the physician and rescind the approval questioning a pre-existing condition. The nurse case manager contacted the physician and asked that he make a medical judgment as to the necessity of the surgery, explaining that waiting for a compensation hearing could potentially delay the surgery by as long as three months. Case management was then able to obtain permission from the injured worker's health insurance to proceed with the surgery. The surgery was performed, as scheduled. The injured worker resumed work four months post surgical; one month after a decision was made by the compensation board which established the case as work related. As a result of the nurse case manager's involvement, the injured worker was able to undergo the medically necessary surgery, without delay, which may have resulted in decreased permanent nerve damage as well as a faster healing and return to work time.

Case Management Provides Injured Worker with Caring Support

CCM not only deals with the medical aspect of a case to expedite the necessary testing and treatment but also builds a relationship with the injured worker and provides support throughout their injury. This injured worker fell on ice sustaining a severe injury to her shoulder requiring immediate surgery. This was approved without delay and surgery was successful. The injured worker required extensive post surgical physical therapy as well as emotional support. The case manager spoke with the injured worker at least once weekly and was available to her even if it was simply to provide words of encouragement. CCM was able to assist the injured worker in returning to work in a modified duty capacity. Due to the type of injury, the injured worker required ergonomic changes to her work station. This was discussed with the employer and the necessary changes were made allowing the injured worker to return to work several months before her anticipated date. CCM received a letter from this injured worker which demonstrated what an important role the case manager had in her case. CCM is able to evaluate each case on an individual basis and determine how to proceed in order to have the best possible outcome. The injured worker provided this letter of gratitude to CCM -

"From the date of injury until I returned to work full time, I had constant communication with my case manager regarding my progress, status, mental stress, you name it! Whatever I needed, my case manager was on top of it. I never had to wait for anything and I had heard some pretty scary stories regarding Workers' Compensation. My case manager is extremely devoted to her clients; she listened to me cry, laughs and lament about the situation I was in, assuaged my fears and always made my life bright after speaking with her. I have never been in this position before; I have been in the workforce for over 40 years. My case manager was the kindest, most compassionate and caring person I have ever been in contact with. She took on the medical profession with a passion - I never had to wait for care, appointments, tests, or devices that I needed. I wish to thank your Agency for the outstanding compassion and care you show your clients. I only wish other agencies were as attentive. Thank you from the bottom of my heart".

Expediting Treatment Promotes a Faster Return to Work

CCM aggressively managed the case of an injured worker with a low back injury from the onset of the referral. Shortly after the injury, a lumbar spine MRI was recommended. Upon receiving the request, case management approved and coordinated the scheduling of the scan within five days. Based on the findings, case management promptly arranged for an appointment with the neurosurgeon of the injured worker's choice. Since surgery was anticipated, case management was able to have the injured worker evaluated within one week. A case manager attended the injured workers' appointment and was able to provide immediate surgical approval which resulted in a surgical date the following day. Case management continued throughout the injured workers' post operative period, providing approval for a course of physical therapy. Case management worked with the employer arranging a progressive return to work plan which included modified duty. Case management continued until the injured worker resumed full duty employment and was working without further complaints or injury related lost time. Based on CCM's ability to expedite the necessary testing, treatment, and modified duty, the injured worker was able to resume work approximately nine to twelve weeks earlier that would have been possible without case management.

Diabetic Education Reduces Low Blood Sugar Episodes

This employee was referred as a special request case due to a low blood sugar incident on the job. The employer was concerned about his safety performing job duties outside of a monitored work environment. Case management spoke with the employee and found that he failed to have any food or drink with him while working in a field position a significant distance from the company vehicle. The nurse case manager educated the employee about the importance of having fast acting carbohydrates in the event that he feels his blood sugar dropping. The employee hadn't been evaluated by an endocrinologist since the incident. In order for the employee to continue working, case management ordered that he scheduled a follow up appointment to address this issue as well as questions he had about an insulin pump. A letter was forwarded to the endocrinologist asking that he review the employee's job description to confirm that he could safely perform his job, reinforce the necessity of having fast acting carbohydrates at the employee's disposal, and discuss whether the employee was a candidate for an insulin pump. Follow up case management has learned that the employee has had no further low blood sugar episodes and that he is now considering utilizing an insulin pump which should better regulate his levels. Educating the employee regarding good diabetic care reduces the employee's risks associated with poorly managed diabetes. Uncontrolled diabetes can lead to heart disease, blindness and death.

Negotiating Rates Saves Money for Self-Insured Workers' Comp Plan:

An injured worker was diagnosed with degenerative lumbar discs. Initially he was informed by his physician that he was not a surgical candidate. After treating with various physicians, a lumbar fusion was completed. The injured worker failed to improve post operatively. Given this, he continued with conservative treatment. This included various lumbar braces, physical therapy and aqua therapy. Without improvement, a spinal cord stimulator was ordered. The nurse case manager worked diligently in an effort to negotiate on this costly equipment as the codes were not on the fee schedule. A total of \$32,000 was saved for this self funded account. An additional \$3,260 was saved while negotiating the DME and therapy requests.