



OPTIMIZED OUTCOME SOLUTIONS

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6 Things to Know About Patient Education, ‘Blind Spots’ by Frank Ferrari

May 13, 2022 – Patient education may be the key to better workers' compensation outcomes, but, for at least one author, it's largely been a blind spot in the field.

According to Harvey Warren, who is a partner at Optimized Outcome Solutions, a good coach or educator can get the best out of a recovering patient, a concept Warren will be presenting at next week's California Self-Insurer's Association Annual Meeting. In advance of the session, Warren spelled out a few points to WorkersCompensation.com to address the possibilities of patient education.

Why is patient education so crucial to successful workers' compensation outcomes?

In the simplest terms, patients want to get better, they just don't know how. That idea was not only my experience writing my book, but it was the unanimous belief of the half-dozen doctors interviewed during writing *The Optimized Patient*. Dr. Sanjay Khurana will be with us on the panel to address the need for patient education. Simply, the one person, the injured worker, who is the most important in achieving a good outcome, has absolutely no training or education on their role in their own recovery.

Since patient education is so crucial, why has it been such a blind spot for so long?

That's the thing about blind spots, they are areas where you don't know what you don't know. Workers' compensation has a focus on claims and investigations and the provision of medical care. The patient's commitment to a positive mindset, essential activity, healing rest and proper nutrition are unseen and unaddressed because those "pillars of recovery" are not part of traditional medical or case management activity. It is a blind spot because we are not looking in that direction.

What does it take to change when people might not know what they don't know?

Ask someone who does know. But seriously folks, who better to learn about where the blind spots are in the injured worker recovery process than from someone who has already been injured and fully recovered? It's very easy to get tunnel vision in a system that has been doing things in the same way for a very long time.

What would it take for the industry to embrace patient education as a tool in workers' compensation processes?

We believe when insurers and companies realize that addressing patient education will bring down the cost of claims, then there will be a rush to implement patient education programs. Every employer understands that fewer accidents mean lower costs. OSHA has institutionalized safety training not just for the economic value, but also out of concern for the well-being of workers. It is the same with patient education once the worker is injured. When the employer provides the tools for the worker to recover faster and stay better longer there is both an economic and humane win for everyone involved.

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What does "success" look like in terms of patient education?

The injured worker is more rapidly back at work and back to their life before the injury. For the employer it looks like fewer cases turning needlessly catastrophic, fewer re-injuries and fewer re-admissions. On a personal level it allows the grand bargain to be generally less adversarial where the language of "claims and investigations" is balanced with an on-going process of patient education focused on genuinely asking, "how are you?".

What else should someone attending your session need to know or think about?

Think about how someone who has not been injured is attempting to address not only the physical journey to recovery but also the mental journey? Our founders have all experienced a major injury or surgery. We know what it's like to be sitting at home, wondering if you will get back to the life you had before the injury, going weeks without phone calls from colleagues, and experiencing the all too frequent loneliness of recovery. The most important thing to remember is that on the other end of all the bureaucracy and administrative reporting of a workers' compensation claim is a human being, a colleague, who is hurt, scared, and often feeling forgotten. What we have learned as patients, and what doctors have confirmed, is that the patient is the wildcard in the recovery process. It takes more than great medicine to heal an injured worker.

About Optimized Outcome Solutions

For decades patients have been disengaged from their own recovery primarily due to a lack of information and education. Optimized Outcome Solutions re-engages program participants in their recovery and provides them with the education and interaction they need to help them achieve an optimized outcome. Optimized Outcome Solutions is currently working with injured workers in Texas and is expanding to other areas. Visit www.optimizedoutcome.com for more information.