



OPTIMIZED OUTCOME SOLUTIONS

Published @ <https://www.workerscompensation.com/expert-analysis/everyone-talks-about-the-weather/>

Everyone Talks About the Weather by Harvey Warren

April 26, 2022 – In my position as the author of *The Optimized Patient*, I am making a direct appeal to the Workers Compensation industry to do something innovative about injured worker recoveries that fail. You have the tools at hand to provide better service and accomplish better outcomes. Sadly, everyone is talking about improving outcomes, and to quote the Charles Dudley Warner’s famous comment regarding talking about the weather, “Everybody is talking about the weather, nobody does anything about it.” (Mark Twain got it from Warner!)

Here are just a few examples from the last couple of years of recognized industry leaders addressing the injured worker experience in the worker compensation system. They comment either on how the industry needs to do better or, in one notable instance, how it learned to actually do better. As a patient advocate and individual that learned that my recovery was in my hands, as well as my surgeon’s hands, I urge all of you to listen to your own peers. This is a direct quote from an article in *WorkersCompensation.com*:

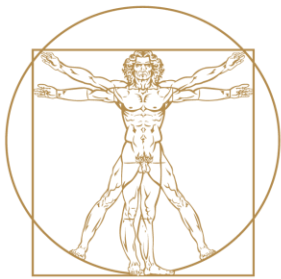
“Our litigation rate has dropped the most,” said Dr. Claire Muselman. “I talk about, if a person breaks a leg we go above and beyond as a society to make sure the person feels taken care of. We send meals, flowers, cards,” she said. “We slap workers' compensation on it and it's like they are the plague and we want nothing to do with them. But it's the same deal; a human being who's been injured and doesn't know what's going to happen.”

On top of that, there's often little to no contact from work. “That's the piece employers need to focus on,” she said.

And this lone comment to the aforementioned article from Mark Taylor confirms that some leaders are already achieving better outcomes by balancing the monetary aspects of the grand bargain with the physical and emotional challenges of injury recovery:

“Earlier in my career I was fortunate enough to be a part of a similar program at a large heavy manufacturer. We added resources to support injured employees, sought out the best medical care available, and treated our employees with respect and dignity (even when they occasionally didn't reciprocate). Our litigation rate dropped from 20-25% down to about 3%. In the years following, our program costs reduced by about 35% in a period of significant inflation of medical and indemnity costs. Whether your motivation is doing the right thing for your people or reducing costs, you can achieve both at the same time. It really does work.”

As a novice attending worker compensation conventions, I have heard a lot of discussion about the need to talk to injured workers about more than the tough stuff like “claims and investigation.” Thanks to the efforts of Brian Allen, VP, Government Relations at Enlyte, I was encouraged and funded to design a support plan based on my book to systematically provide the kind of patient education needed to move the workers’ compensation programming to a more caring next level. Sometimes the planets align for exceptional outcomes and my relationships with a network of top-flight surgeons and relevant celebrities afforded me the support needed to move from the talking about it to doing something about it.



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One of the clearest voices about the need for better ways to understand how to return injured workers to good health and back to work is William (Bill) Zachry. This is an excerpt from his talk on Simple Concepts for a Complex System - Top Cost Drivers in Workers' Compensation in January of this year.

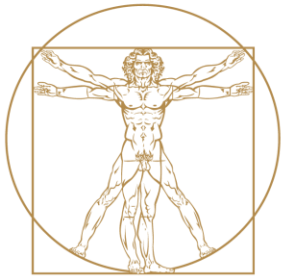
“3 % of the workers' compensation claims account for 60 % of the expense and benefits in workers' compensation. Some of these claims are considered “Catastrophic” claims (quadriplegics, paraplegics, amputations, severe burns, total loss of vision, head injuries”) The rest are “sisterhood of the traveling body parts injuries” (also known as Jumper Claims). If we can identify the Jumper claims within four weeks of the injury and close them within one year of the date of injury it could cut off up to 50 % of those claims costs. Which is also equal to a 20 % savings for the whole system. To do this will require a focus on finding the “at-risk” employee and intervening with appropriate settlement authority to get these claims settled.” Patient education, we believe, can be a game-changer helping to make that settlement timeline a reality by providing the kind of support that is now missing from the worker compensation methodology.

“Every patient needs a coach, someone who is coming back from where you want to go” to quote NBA Hall of Fame star, Bill Walton. Bill was my coach and aided in my recovery. Innovative programs like Optimized Outcome Solutions filmed Bill Walton sharing how coaching - from a patient's perspective after an injury, can help achieve an optimized recovery. He would know after his 38 orthopedic surgeries. Celebrity motivational speakers Joseph McClendon III and Blair Singer filmed messages for injured workers helping them to understand that “whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you're right”. Joseph has been the opening speaker for Tony Robbins for 30 years and Blair Singer is one of Robert Kyosaki's Rich Dad Advisors. Feeling challenged about getting better? Listen to our message from MMA fighter, Nathan Quarry, who went back into the cage after spine surgery. And he won. Yes, if he can do it, you can do it, too. My message that “the patient is the wildcard in the recovery process” seems to have resonated with the claims managers and will be the subject of several upcoming convention presentations.

The importance of the “mindset” pillar that Nathan Quarry references also shows up in an article by Frank Pennachio, The Myth of the Bad Employee from 2008 -

“Injuries disrupt workers' daily lives. Even a minor injury may seem like a major occurrence because it is unfamiliar and frightening, or it has occurred at a time when there is stress in the workers' lives. Employers often fail to inform employees about what to expect when an injury occurs, creating further anxiety. Worried about how their coworkers perceive their injury, they quickly become socially isolated, lose their sense of productivity and purpose, and sink into depression. Their ability to deal with the frustration and pain lessens and the magnitude of the injury becomes distorted. Yet, the system keeps treating them medically. Prolonged absences then morph into a “disability attitude.” Work defines a person's identity in several ways, including the self-respect that comes from earning a living. According to clinical psychologist Kevin Gaffney, “With delayed recovery comes the issue of identity disturbance.”

Instructional videos delivered over 16 weeks by email, together with print and audio versions of The Optimized Patient book and a weekly personal call with a recovery guide, provide the foundation for delivering better outcomes for injured workers. Dr. Kay Bruening, PhD, RDN was recently awarded the NDEP AND 2022 Outstanding Dietetic Educator award. She, together with celebrity French Chef, Guillaume Sabbadin designed a 4-week meal plan using the proper ingredients needed for healing, prepared deliciously for Optimized Outcome Solutions to provide the right fuel along with all the other aspects of healing after surgery or a major injury. I believe we can all agree that injured workers would all benefit from additional coaching and education as part of their “compensation”.



OPTIMIZED OUTCOME SOLUTIONS

The goal of Optimized Outcome Solutions is summarized in three simple ideas about injured worker recovery:

The patient is the wildcard in the recovery process.

People want to get better, they just don't know how.

There is a method to help injured workers get better faster and stay better longer.

Our patient-initiated program is doing something about helping the injured worker in the recovery process by teaching about Mindset, Activity, Rest and Nutrition. These “pillars” of the patient education program are what everyone has been talking about. We hope the industry will join us and those we have quoted in this article to finally move from talking about the problem to doing something about it.

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.