



OPTIMIZED OUTCOME SOLUTIONS

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How Are You? by Harvey Warren

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From an injured worker's perspective, these three words might have gone a very long way to helping me fully recover. The problem is, the vocabulary of workers' compensation is more familiar with words like "claims" and "investigation" than it is with the expression of fundamental concern for the injured worker in the simple question, "How are you?" The tragedy of this defect in the workers' comp lexicon is that it adds fuel to the already raging fire of injured worker fears and concerns about what the future may hold for them.

I recently attended the WCI Conference in Orlando, Florida as the writer of The Optimized Patient book. It's a book about preparing for and recovering from surgery and major injuries. As a "civilian" observer at the conference, I picked up on a growing concern that compensation and medical care is not enough to see a claim to a positive conclusion. I would like to confirm how important that insight is to the future of the workers' comp establishment. Truly, the injured worker is the wildcard in the recovery process and, if they are not taken by the hand in that process, the potential for bad outcomes looms large. Not only does the injured worker have no idea how to navigate the claims process, they have even less of an idea how to fully recover without some help. I can verify this fact from my own personal journey recovering from three spine surgeries.

Although I am, by most accounts, a well-educated adult, I must admit I missed the class on Injury Recovery 101. I think we all missed that class. My years-long recovery was so challenging, yet successful, that I took a year off from work to write a book about it. The Optimized Patient book addresses the complex and somewhat mysterious process of getting well after surgery or injury. There was a lot of medical support and medical information when my surgery happened, but very little on how to keep a positive attitude, what does quality rest contribute, or what's the real value of activity and blood flow. Next to nothing was shared with me about proper nutrition and its role in preparing for and recovering from surgery.

The good news is, I heard some of these same issues being discussed by leaders like Dr. Chris Brigham MD, Mark Pew, Jerry Fogel, Bob Wilson, Bill Zachry and Becky Curtis. The best news, they understood the importance of the emotional support that is needed to heal an injured worker. They were talking about, "How are you?" and suggesting that a compassionate and helping hand is just as important as the doctor. I think we would all agree that patient education is a better path than litigation.

I also think it is fairly obvious that if the patient does not engage in their own recovery that an investigation into a chronic claim won't be far behind. That is the worst possible outcome where everyone loses, especially the injured worker, regardless of the compensation. Brian Allen, VP of Government Relations for Mitchell, reached out to me to and encouraged me to revise the book to make it applicable to the broader workers' comp industry. Subsequently, the book has now become a service providing patient education, engagement, encouragement and measurement. That service can be summed up in three words, "How are you?" The early results of our pilot of Optimized Outcome Solutions, with injured workers in Texas, has confirmed to us, and the employers who are exploring with us, that the workers' comp experience needs a patient education and coaching component if the industry ever hopes to improve injured worker

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outcomes. Improving those outcomes may be as simple as a weekly call letting the worker know that your employer has not forgotten about you. You are more than a claim and an investigation. Supporting the injured worker during the gray area of “healing” can be converted from a time of fear and concern to a time of well received education and caring with structured outreach that consistently asks, “How are you?”

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.