

2013 STUDY OF ACCESS TO MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR INJURED WORKERS

PRESENTATION TO COMMISSION ON
HEALTH AND SAFETY AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION

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Overview of Presentation

- Study Objective
- Key Activities
 - Injured Workers Survey
 - Analysis of WCIS Data
- Findings

Study Objectives

- To determine whether injured workers have adequate access to care and healthcare-related products and to recommend methods to support continued access
- Compare study findings to findings of studies conducted in 2006 and 2008

- Survey and Population Characteristics:
 - Telephone survey of 500 randomly selected workers who were injured in either the last quarter of 2011 or the first quarter of 2012 was conducted
 - The average age of respondents was 43 and nearly half were female
 - Forty-five percent (45%) of respondents were Latino
 - Most respondents had sprains, strains or other muscle or joint injuries
 - Eighty-five percent (85%) saw a health care provider, most frequently a general practitioner, within three days of their injury, although 32 percent saw a specialist
 - Fifty percent (50%) of injured workers saw a physical or occupational therapist during the period of their care

- **Survey Findings:**
 - 55 percent of respondents traveled less than six miles to their first provider visit
 - 72 percent of respondents received care through a Medical Provider Network (MPN)
 - 84 percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with their main health care provider, and 85 percent of those who saw specialists were satisfied with the care they received
 - 62 percent of respondents reported that their main provider understood the physical and mental demands of the worker’s job very well, discussed the need for work restrictions or changes in the job (77 percent), and discussed how they should avoid re-injury (64 percent)
 - Only 7 percent of respondents reported that they were denied care
 - 11 percent of respondents indicated that they were represented by attorneys

- Data Analysis Approach
 - This study is the first attempt to use medical claims submitted to WCIS to address injured workers' access issues
 - The WCIS data consisted of over fifty million medical bills submitted between 2007 and 2011
 - Where useful, data were analyzed separately for ten regions of the state
 - The number of workers' compensation medical bills for the state as a whole remained relatively constant from year to year during the five years

Key Activities – Analysis of WCIS Data

- Data Analysis Findings:
 - Use of general practitioners declined steadily across the state
 - Use of orthopedists declined in the Bay Area and Los Angeles, but use of orthopedists in other parts of the state remained constant or increased
 - Use of chiropractors in the Bay Area and the Central Coast regions declined but remained constant in other areas of the state
 - Physical and occupational therapy for workers' compensation injuries were provided most frequently in the San Diego area
 - There was little variation in the types of treatments provided to injured workers across regions
 - The four most frequently billed services were:
 - Electric stimulation therapy
 - Therapeutic exercises
 - Office visit – established patient (extensive)
 - Office visit – established patient (moderate)

Study Findings

- Most injured workers had access to needed care without barriers
- Injured workers reported a high level of satisfaction with care and high quality of care - this finding is consistent with prior studies
- Improvements are needed to increase rates of recovery and job modifications
- Bills submitted by general practice physicians declined as a percentage of total bills from 2007 through 2011, while bills submitted by chiropractors, mental health professionals, physical therapists and physician specialists increased
- Orthopedists and general surgeons accounted for the largest percentage of bills submitted by physician specialists
- The percentage of bills submitted by pain management specialists increased

Issues to be Addressed in 2014 Study

- Investigate injured workers' understanding of MPNs
- Investigate the impact of denials and utilization review on injured workers
- Identify differences in services when injured workers are treated by specialists and general practitioners
- Identify method for evaluating rate of specialists' entry and exit from workers' compensation networks
- Investigate workers' compensation payment rates in comparison to other payers' rates
- Investigate increased number of medical bills per injured worker claim, including changes in services provided, costs per medical bill and costs per injured worker claim