Early Medical Management

**Employers frequently dread** the filing of a new workers’ compensation claim. The time investigating the claim, the paperwork and the time rearranging the work scheduling to cover for the person who has been injured are hassles most employers would prefer to avoid. The fear factor and dread is even worse for the employee. The employee is concerned about having to deal with the insurance adjuster and how will they be able to support themself and the family while they are unable to work.

**Among the employee’s fears** are concerns about the quality of the medical care, the frequency of their medical appointments, will they need specialists’ care, and how long the medical care will last. By providing medical management of the injury claim from the moment it happens, employers can alleviate a lot of the employee’s fears and concerns while minimizing the overall cost

**Early medical management** has led to many insurers and third party administrators to having a central claims reporting point where a trained nurse takes in the information for the First Report of Injury form required in almost all states, and simultaneously provides the information to the claims office. [The old way was for the claim to be reported to the claims office that would then in turn provide it to the medical management team at some point later.]

**In the early medical management concept,** if the injured employee’s injury does not create an emergency situation, the injured employee calls the telephone number of the claims reporting unit. The nurse who answers the call (frequently referred to as a triage nurse) will be compassionated and supportive. The triage nurse evaluates the medical needs of the injured employee and directs the employee to the appropriate level of care, whether is a local occupational clinic, a specialist or hospital emergency room. The triage nurse coordinates the medical care with medical provider, the employee and the employer.

**If the injured employee** was too severely injured to call in the claim, the employee’s supervisor should call the triage nurse, who after obtaining all available information from the supervisor, contacts the employee and the medical facility where the employee went for the emergency care. Based on the information obtained from the employee and the emergency medical provider, the triage nurse arranges for the employee to receive further medical care at the appropriate level, whether it is general occupational care or a specialist.

**The triage nurse** provides immediate medical assistance when the injured employee needs it. The employee is normally appreciative of the fact that the triage nurse took immediate action to assist him/her to obtain quality medical care when he/she needed it. This is a definite morale booster and shows the employee that the employer cares about the employee’s wellbeing.

**Immediate quality care** arranged by the triage nurse benefits the employer in several ways including:

* The chance of the adversarial relationship that sometimes develops between the employee and the employer over a workers’ compensation claim is greatly diminished as the employee know he/she is getting prompt, quality care.
* The time the employee is off work is diminished as the employee goes immediately to the appropriate level of care.
* The recovery outcome is improved as the injured employee is treated by the most appropriate medical provider
* The fear factor that often leads employees to hire an attorney is greatly diminished.

**We strongly recommend** early medical management on every workers’ compensation claim. If you need more information on arranging early medical management for your company, please contact us.