

California Chiropractic Association

Require Primary Treating Physicians to Prescribe Conservative Care Prior to Opioids and Surgery

ISSUE

- The alarming increase in opioid use and surgery among injured workers in California has become an epidemic.
- Medical Treatment Utilization Guidelines (MTUS) recommend Primary Treating Physicians (PTP) prescribe conservative care prior to opioids and surgery, but statistics reveal PTPs don't follow the voluntary guidelines.
- **Injured workers' access to conservative treatment has been severely limited, if not eliminated especially in back injuries.**
- Back injury and pain are the most common industrial injuries and one of the most successfully resolved through conservative, non-invasive treatment modalities.

SOLUTION

- Introduce legislation that would require providers treating injured workers with back injuries to follow MTUS guidelines.
- MTUS guidelines require conservative care prior to opioids and surgery.
- An independent study by the California Workers' Compensation Institute (CWCI) found that California has seen a 300% increase in opioid prescriptions over the last decade.
- CWCI found that nearly half of the Schedule II opioid prescriptions in California workers' compensation are for minor back injury claims, a treatment regimen that the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine describes as typically not useful in the sub-acute and chronic phases. (CWCI, 2011)

- A recent study analyzed the Washington State Workers' Compensation system and found that seeing a chiropractor first following a work injury to the low back significantly reduced the likelihood of surgery: approximately 42.7% of workers who first saw a surgeon had surgery, in contrast to only 1.5% of those who saw a chiropractor. (Spine 2013)
- A study of one thousand workers' compensation cases with lumbar spinal fusions found that of 600 single-injury patients, 71% never returned to work, and of the 400 patients with multiple-surgeries, 95% never returned to work.
- Two years after back surgery only 26% of injured Ohio state workers returned to work whereas 67% who received conservative care instead of back surgery, returned to work.
- Patients who refused surgery and opted for alternative and less invasive procedures to treat their back pain reported experiencing healthier and more personally satisfying outcomes.
- A recent study of Rhode Island's ongoing Integrated Chronic Pain Program which included conservative care, revealed a reduced per member per year (PMPY) total average medical costs by 27%, decreased the average number of ER visits by 61%, lowered the number of average total prescriptions by 63% and reduced the average number of opioid scripts by 86%
- A recent study of Partnership HealthPlan of California revealed high-dose daily opioids dropped by 50% with the inclusion of chiropractic treatment. In addition, Partnership HealthPlan saved \$1 million a month in avoided opioid prescription costs more than covering the cost of all interventions including the new chiropractic benefit.

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