

Submission
No 282

INQUIRY INTO NSW WORKERS COMPENSATION SCHEME

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially Confidential

Thursday, 17 May 2012

Joint Select Committee on the NSW Workers Compensation Scheme
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Committee,

I would like to make brief personal submission to the Inquiry on the NSW Worker's Compensation Scheme.

I am a Specialist Musculoskeletal Physiotherapist with over 13 years in clinical practice. During this time, I have managed several thousand injured workers as a sole clinician, or as part of a multi-disciplinary team. 99% of my Workcover caseload involves expert opinion and management of injured workers who have failed conservative or surgical intervention. As a Specialist Physiotherapist, I am often asked to review injured workers to identify any other physiotherapeutic options as referred to me by physiotherapy or medical specialists colleagues. For the past two years I have also acted as a physiotherapy consultant to a major insurer, conducting early peer reviews of physical treatment providers.

With this unique perspective and experience I have identified the following serious problems in the scheme that relate to treatment delivery, early return to work, and hence the scheme cost:

1. Specialist Physiotherapists are not recognized within the scheme and cannot provide effective input into the scheme. Workcover has continually refused to recognize the role of specialist physiotherapists with no logical rationale provided.
2. More often than not, workers are not diagnosed properly or over-medicalised, and as a consequence treatment provided is contrary to known effective evidence.
3. Most general practitioners are not familiar with musculoskeletal diagnosis or the appropriate first-line management of injured workers in the context of the compensable system.
4. Some providers refer to other providers where there is an obvious financial conflict of interest.
5. Solicitors' communications with injured workers has the capacity to influence return to work via the constant pursuit of impairment assessment and civil law claims. These communications are not made transparently to all providers trying to help the injured worker return to work.
6. Communication between all providers is fragmented and can result in significant inconsistencies.

I wish to suggest that:

1. All medical professionals undergo formal training in the compensable scheme if they are to continue as the primary managers of the injured worker within the scheme.
2. All financial conflicts of interest are disclosed between providers.
3. Solicitors' communications is made openly and transparently in the management of all compensable claims.
4. The government invests heavily in designing an enabling compensable "e-worker" communications platform that contains relevant management information for all providers.
5. Specialist Physiotherapists be recognized and utilised in the scheme given there 12 years or more of formal training and value to challenging and difficult non-surgical cases.

The above changes if implemented have the capacity to make significant in roads through better management, effective and transparent communication, disclosure of conflicts of interest, as well as the utility and identification of most appropriately trained health professionals.

Kind Regards,