

Healing time commonly delayed in worker's compensation injuries

Question: I am an employer and have noticed that the spinal injuries that are filed with worker's compensation seem to take longer than those that are not.

Why does this happen?

Answer: The motivation for an injured employee, that is getting salary compensation and health-care compensation, to return to work is much lower than an employee losing a paycheck and or paying for their own health care for the same injury. I do not believe that an employee is unethical or trying to milk the company in these situations but rather utilize the system to their maximum benefit. I also believe people hold on to their pain or illness longer knowing there can be monetary compensation in some way. Even a dedicated employee that is injured is not going to rush back to work if no repercussions for being an absentee exist.

My concern as a health practitioner is that people have a tendency to connect and manage their injury in direct proportion to the time they are allowed out of work. It is amazing how many patients miraculously let go of their pain and disability when it is time to return to work or their coverage runs out. It is not uncommon for patients to hold onto their symptoms through an entire legal battle lasting years. Lives and health can be destroyed during these extended periods of non-closure of legal matters. I do not believe it is worth your health to allow your lingering condition to erode your life while waiting. There are almost always permanent health side effects to extended health issues. Even in short-term worker's compensation injuries it is best to focus on getting well and not your

financial benefits. Many companies now have policies that require injured employees to report to work even if injured, but perform duties that don't require the injured area to be involved. Psychologically it is beneficial to maintain any means of contact with your job and maintain the usual habits of daily activities including getting up to go to work.

Worker compensation determinations in the state of New Jersey are still dictated by your employer and until these laws are changed you must follow your employer's insurance health-care guidelines. The best choice for your employees is to get well and go back to work as soon as possible.

Quote of the Week: *"The bad news is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot."* – Michael Altshuler