Return to Work after a Traumatic Brain Injury: Challenges and Opportunities

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BWC Demographics

- Largest state-fund insurance system in the U.S.
- Provides coverage to approximately 242,000 public and private sector employers
- Provides coverage to 60% of Ohio’s workforce
- More than 100,000 new claims filed each year
- Reimbursement for medical treatment and lost wages related to work-related injuries, occupational diseases and deaths
Mission Statement

To protect Ohio’s workers and employers through the prevention, care and management of workplace injuries and illnesses at fair rates

Two main approaches:
Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) Work-related Statistics

- Approximately 47,800 injured workers are living with a work-related TBI.¹
- Average of 2,000 new work-related brain injuries occur each year (97% mild; 3% moderate-severe).
- 80% of all injured workers with a TBI returned to work.²
- 35% of injured workers with moderate or severe brain injuries have returned to work.³
- Most common causes: strike/blow to head, falls, motor vehicle accident (MVA).

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¹ BWC claims database
² BWC claims database 2007-2015
³ BWC claims data 2016 – 2017
Prevention - Division of Safety & Hygiene

- Statewide safety awareness campaign: slips, trips, and falls, overexertion and MVAs
- Consultative services, safety education and training
- Health and wellness program for small employers in specific high-risk industries
- Safety Grants: Assist employers to purchase equipment designed to reduce hazards in the workplace
TBI patient services

- Medical case management/care coordination
- On-site case management visit(s)
- BWC catastrophic nurses
- Adjustment counseling
- Brain injury rehabilitation
- Vocational rehabilitation
- Home and vehicle modifications
Goal
Medical Management

To return every injured worker back to optimal level of function, maximum quality of life, and back to work
Return-to-Work Challenges

- Early referrals to vocational rehabilitation; number of referrals
- Establishing feasibility/employability
- Provider awareness of the unique cognitive and behavioral impairments of TBI patients
- Time-based services
- Lack of social support at home and in the workplace
Return-to-Work Challenges

- Keeping the patient engaged in vocational rehabilitation
- Employers may not have the ability to accommodate the TBI employee’s needs.
- Employer lack of education about brain injuries
  - May not understand how a TBI impacts behavior
  - May not understand why certain behaviors occur
Vocational Rehabilitation Opportunities

- Vocational case management
- Specialized services geared toward employment goals
- No limit on vocational rehabilitation attempts with eligibility
- Allows treatment of whole person
- Collaboration with other agencies
  - Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities
  - Ohio Department Job and Family Services
Vocational Rehabilitation
Menu of Services

- Vocational case management
- Physical restoration services
- Employment services (i.e., job placement, job development, job coaching, etc.)
- Return-to-work incentives
- Living maintenance compensation
- Supportive service (adjustment counseling)
- Training, books, supplies, other tools
**Take Aways**

- Focus on the patient’s strengths.
- Build a treatment plan around strengths.
- Establish a support system.
- Communication is key.
- Be creative.
- Allow multiple attempts at vocational rehabilitation.
- Maximize available resources.