

School: ATEC – Medical Management
Course: Keep Moving Forward
Faculty: Rob Townsend, Clinical Consultant, Bardavon Health Innovations
Josh Schuette, Executive Director of National WC Sales & Account
Management, Brooks Rehabilitation
Dr. Russell Addeo, Director of Behavioral Medicine, Brooks Rehabilitation

Summary

The panel discussion titled "**Keep Moving Forward**" featured Rob Townsend of Bardavon and Josh Schuette and Dr. Russell Addeo from Brooks Rehabilitation. It focused on rehabilitation challenges in workers' compensation and strategies to improve outcomes. Key themes included addressing delays in rehabilitation, non-physical influences on recovery, and the importance of tailored interventions.

The discussion began with introductions and highlighted the extensive experience of the panelists in workers' compensation rehabilitation. Townsend emphasized that delays in initiating functional capacity evaluations (FCEs) often lead to increased costs and poorer outcomes. He advocated for early intervention and preparing injured workers for evaluations to ensure effective results.

Schuette, with extensive experience in functional capacity evaluations, shared cases where improper preparation for FCEs resulted in invalid results, emphasizing the need for tailored therapy aligned with job demands. He noted that some therapists only address acute recovery phases, leaving workers unprepared for physically demanding roles.

Dr. Addeo, a neuropsychologist, focused on the psychological components affecting recovery, such as fear of re-injury, catastrophizing, and non-compliance. He introduced validated questionnaires to identify psychological barriers and discussed strategies like psychologically informed physical therapy and tailored interventions to address these issues. Addeo stressed the importance of distinguishing between malingering, somatization, and other psychological conditions, advocating for assessments to validate non-physical influences and ensure accurate diagnoses.

A significant portion of the discussion explored the value of communication among stakeholders. The panelists stressed that educating employers, case managers, and injured workers about psychological barriers and physical recovery goals is crucial. They emphasized creating collaborative, gradual return-to-work strategies rather than an abrupt transition. For example, injured workers might start with reduced hours or responsibilities, which can minimize fear and promote confidence in their abilities.

The panelists shared practical tools for validating inconsistencies during evaluations. Schuette described distraction-based tests and rapid exchange grip tests to detect discrepancies in worker performance. These methods help differentiate between valid limitations and factors like fear or lack of preparation.

The discussion highlighted the role of specialized care in addressing complex cases. The panelists emphasized referring workers to the right specialists, such as neuropsychologists or rehabilitation experts, to ensure effective treatment. They shared success stories where switching providers led to significant progress for injured workers, particularly those dealing with chronic conditions or psychological barriers.

The session concluded with recommendations for improving rehabilitation outcomes, including timely functional assessments, consistent monitoring of progress, and addressing both physical and non-physical barriers. The panelists stressed the importance of a team-based approach, where all stakeholders collaborate to support the injured worker's recovery journey. By implementing these strategies, the ultimate goal is to restore workers' abilities and livelihoods effectively, creating a win-win situation for all involved.

Learning Objectives

1. Identify common timelines and treatment pathways for functional testing and their impact on outcomes.
2. Recognize non-physical influences, such as psychological factors, that may delay recovery.
3. Understand the significance of early intervention in rehabilitation to prevent long-term delays.
4. Explore strategies for effective communication with stakeholders regarding non-physical components of injury recovery.
5. Develop approaches to monitor progress, detect plateaus, and implement tailored interventions.

Primary Takeaways

1. **Timeliness of Intervention:** Delays in functional testing and treatment contribute to increased costs and reduced success in injury recovery.
2. **Non-Physical Barriers:** Psychological factors, like fear of re-injury and catastrophizing, significantly impact recovery timelines and outcomes.
3. **Importance of Preparation:** Injured workers should be adequately prepared for functional capacity evaluations to ensure valid results and effective outcomes.

4. **Customized Care Approaches:** Tailoring interventions to the specific physical and psychological needs of injured workers enhances rehabilitation success.
5. **Collaborative Strategies:** Communication and cooperation among providers, employers, and case managers are essential to address barriers and promote progress.

Course Outline

- 1) Introduction
 - a) Overview of the "Keep Moving Forward" theme.
 - b) Panelist introductions: Rob Townsend, Josh Schuette, and Dr. Russell Addeo.
 - c) Objectives: Addressing delays, functional testing, and the role of non-physical factors in recovery.
- 2) Key Discussion Points
 - a) Timeliness and Preparation
 - i) Consequences of late functional testing.
 - ii) Importance of early intervention.
 - iii) Preparing injured workers for evaluations to ensure meaningful results.
 - b) Recognizing and Addressing Non-Physical Barriers
 - i) Psychological factors affecting recovery (e.g., kinesiophobia, catastrophizing).
 - ii) Examples of inconsistent behaviors during evaluations.
 - iii) Use of validated questionnaires to measure non-physical influences.
 - c) Strategies for Effective Rehabilitation
 - i) Role of physically and psychologically informed therapy.
 - ii) Monitoring progress through objective measures.
 - iii) Addressing plateaus with modified interventions.
- 3) Enhancing Stakeholder Communication
 - a) Importance of explaining non-physical barriers to employers and case managers.
 - b) Educating injured workers on their capabilities to reduce fear and resistance.
 - c) Team collaboration to create effective return-to-work strategies.
- 4) Recommendations and Summary
 - a) Early intervention and consistent monitoring.
 - b) Referral to specialists when necessary for comprehensive care.
 - c) Gradual reintroduction to work with reduced responsibilities.
 - d) Collaboration among all parties to support recovery and return-to-work goals.

NOTE: Artificial Intelligence was used in the creation of this document.