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What's Trending in DME?

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5 MIN READ

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Technology is playing a larger role in workers' compensation as durable medical equipment innovations are helping injured workers return to work at a faster rate. The problem is keeping up with what's new and what's necessary for expediting recovery. Bob Smith, CEO of Priority Care Solutions, a division of Genex Services, offers tips on how to get the most from your DME supplier in today's Inside Workers' Comp.

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Tom Kerr (TK): Bob, what are some of the trends you're seeing with DME?

Robert Smith (RS): I think in DME overall, we're seeing that there are a lot of new products coming to the forefront with new technologies. So, trying to be on top of those things is key. We're providing more education to adjusters about these products. I think that's, that's something that's very important as we move forward in the next few years. Because, things that we utilized over the last 10, 15 years have become antique. And today, with technology and the latest things that are taking place in workers' comp, there's a lot of things that can streamline the process, be more cost-efficient and help facilitate better care for the actual patients.

TK: You had mentioned that part of your role is educating workers' comp professionals about new technology available. How do you go about doing that?

RS: Well, we do it two ways. We have our big DME providers that we've been working with over the years come into our office. They usually come in twice a year to bring in all the new products and to educate our staff on any new products that are coming out. They show them physically what the products are and how they work, so they can interact intelligently with the clients on the phone.

The other way that we're doing it with it from a DME perspective is, to make sure that the materials that represent these products get to the adjuster's desk, because that's an education that you have to do today. For example, if adjuster sees that a code is an E1399 — a miscellaneous category where everything gets thrown into — and for them to approve it, they want to know specifics. It's not so much the cost factor, it's really being educated on what benefit the DME provides. So, with our manufacturers, we ask for those types of materials for the new products and we make sure that we get that to all the adjusters that we deal with on a national basis.

TK: And I guess having a stronger case management component helps that communication process, right?

RS: You're absolutely right, Tom. Having a company like Genex, that's state of the art and having the nurses that they have around the country, the nice thing is we can both learn from each other by directly bringing and demonstrating new products to adjusters and injured workers. But also, by having the case managers interact with the physicians themselves, being on the front end of that, we can actually be a lot more effective as a group together.

TK: Can you give me an example of one of the new products you've seen that could make a big difference in workers' comp?

RS: Sure. A company called OrthoCor has technology that mimics what a TENS unit used to do but now has taken it to a different level. They first marketed this product about two years ago to orthopedists around the country, became very successful, got it FDA approved, and now it's just coming into the worker's comp market. This one has specific electrodes that are built into the actual package. So, if you have a knee injury or a torn ACL, this is something that you can put on yourself like a wrap. It can go over your pants. And then you have two electrodes, one on each side. And they work for two hours at a time.

So, from a therapy standpoint, you could still go out and do typical activities like grocery shopping; you could wear this while you're actively doing something and it helps with the rehabilitation process.

TK: I know one of the challenges DME providers face is ensuring timely and accurate delivery. How do good DME delivery providers make sure the right equipment is delivered and that the person is getting exactly what he or she needs?

RS: We do a lot of phone calls, making sure that the equipment or device went out the door when it was supposed to. When the product gets delivered, we call both the patient and the manufacturer to make sure that they did deliver it to the right home. We have a team that that's all they do. They know when, in our system, what's supposed to be delivered around the country. And they'll make those calls to ensure the equipment is there and ready to use.

TK: And, what's the turnaround time in terms of when it's ordered and when it's delivered?

RS: Usually 24 hours. When we get an order, it's usually delivered if it's drop shipped. If it's something that has to be set up, like a bed, that's usually means that we'll contract with one of our local providers who goes out to the home and sets that up for the injured worker.

TK: Thanks, Bob. In our next Inside Workers' Comp, we'll discuss trends in diagnostic services. Until then, thanks for listening.



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