

Surgical Spotlight

Fall, 2018

Market Movements

Changing of the Guard

We are on the cusp of a dramatic change in the workers' compensation industry, anticipated to peak within the next five years as we undergo a major shift in the U.S. workforce. The shift will be four-pronged as we see insurance adjusters, physicians and nurses retiring at a rate that exceeds college enrollment in these fields, combined with baby boomers who are working longer before retirement — often with multiple chronic health conditions.

According to the Department of Labor, in 2017 the average age among insurance workers, nurses and physicians was 62 years old. In the next five years, there is an anticipated retirement of 500,000 insurance professionals. This equates to one-fourth of the insurance industry's workforce retiring by the end of 2018, leading to a tremendous loss of institutional knowledge from the insurance industry. The nursing and physician shortages have already impacted hospital staffing and rural healthcare offices, and the shortage is anticipated to worsen as the number of exiting healthcare personnel increases. While many white collar baby boomers are getting set to retire from their lifelong careers, there are also record numbers of baby boomers taking new positions in new fields to supplement their retirement incomes, working well into their 70's with comorbidities such as osteoporosis, arthritis, hypertension and more.

To survive, the industry must evolve and adapt new practices to bridge the gap. The solution must include a combination of human expertise combined with technology in workers' compensation and the healthcare field. We have already seen movement in this direction. Telemedicine is being offered to injured workers in rural locations. Carriers and vendors are utilizing data analytics, mobile applications and other new technologies to ensure ongoing success in this new world of workers' compensation. This situation truly presents a “make it” or “break it” opportunity for this industry.

Author: Delainne Bond, BSN, RN, CCM (Paradigm Specialty Networks)
Sources: McKinsey & Company and U.S. Department of Labor





Notable Outcomes

Miracle Come Back

It was a huge surprise when Tiger Woods publicized to the world that he would be missing the 2014 Masters, due to a pinched back nerve that was going to require a microdiscectomy. A year later, as he was competing at the Wyndham Championship, excruciating back pain overcame him — forcing the golf legend to pull himself out of the competition and eventually receive a second microdiscectomy. After undergoing yet a third surgery for pain management in late 2015, Tiger announced his retirement from the game a year and a half later on news that a fourth back surgery was imminent. Performing the latest procedure was Dr. Richard Guyer of the Texas Back Institute (a Paradigm Specialty Networks provider).

But only seven months after Dr. Guyer performed the lumbar fusion surgery, Tiger shocked the golf world by announcing his plans to return to the green. On September 23, 2018, history was made when Tiger won the Tour Championship in Atlanta. Not only did Tiger prove that he's a fighter, he shined a spotlight on the orthopedic surgeons and medical technologies that have advanced faster than many thought possible. When a surgeon is an expert in his or her specialty, and utilizes the proper techniques to correct such serious injuries, success stories will continue to define the sports world.

Sources: Becker's Spine Review, ThoughtCo, and People Magazine

Statistics Central

ASCs: Cost Winner for Orthopedic Surgery

Workers Compensation Research Institute (WCRI) recently released its assessment of a five-year study on the cost variance of orthopedic surgeries performed in Ambulatory Surgery Centers (ASCs) and hospitals. WCRI specifically surveyed the fees associated with knee and shoulder surgeries, which are two of the most prevalent surgical procedures rendered in both places of service.

Out of 18 states analyzed, WCRI concluded that having either procedure administered in an ASC costs less than when adjudicated in the hospital outpatient setting. The data highlights that in recent periods, knee surgeries are 21% lower in cost in the ASC in 14 out of 18 states. Similarly, shoulder surgeries are 10% less expensive in 11 states. In both scenarios, the cost-saving driver states are Florida, Virginia and Wisconsin.

When it comes to orthopedic surgical procedures, ASCs continue to deliver better clinical outcomes, in addition to being more cost-effective centers of care than hospitals.

Source: Workers Compensation Research Institute

Company News

Paradigm Specialty Networks is proud to announce the addition of the following leading Physician Groups to its Ortho and Spine Network:

- Azalea Orthopaedics (TX)
- The Center for Neurosciences, Orthopaedics & Spine (SD)
- Congress Orthopaedic Associates (CA)
- Florida Orthopaedic Institute (FL)
- Orthopedic and Sports Medicine Center (MO)
- Orthopaedic Associates of Wisconsin, S.C. (WI)
- Plano Orthopedic Sports Medicine & Spine Center (TX)
- OrthoKansas (KS)
- Rockhill Orthopaedic Specialists (MO)
- Salina Ortho (KS)
- Southern Oregon Neurosurgical & Spine Associates (OR)
- Texas Back Institute (TX)

Watchlist Focus

Prove Your Product

UnitedHealthcare is taking a head-to-head stance with egregiously marked-up amniotic tissue products. These items minimize scar tissue development, cover surgical wounds, control swelling and modify hair loss. What the group asserts is that the companies selling these products lack evidence-based studies to prove that the tissues are as effective as their distributors claim. UnitedHealthcare now defines amniotic tissue products as “unproven and/or not medically necessary for any indication,” meaning the insurance company no longer covers their use.

This position highlights the critical nature of new medical products being properly researched and thoroughly studied. These assessments offer significant data about medical product trends, associated dangers, true purpose and usage. The further precision of such studies defines the appropriateness of the medical product going to market.

Source: Wall Street Journal



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Did You Know?

Patient Connections: Reducing Surgical Complications

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nine out of every 1,000 surgical patients are likely to acquire an infection in a hospital environment. However, receiving a surgical procedure at an Ambulatory Surgery Center (ASC) decreases the incidence of acquiring a surgical complication. This is primarily due to statistical findings that ASCs are cleaner and safer than hospitals. ASC Focus, the journal of the Ambulatory Surgery Center Association, suggests that ASC staff should maintain a closely monitored communication flow with their surgical patients, as the early signs of infection can be immediately captured and properly treated before they escalate.

For example, if ASC personnel reach out to their patients via calls and texts throughout the post-surgery period, the occurrence of surgical complications is reduced. The patient interacts with staff by texting or video conferencing any symptoms he or she may have, including images of the surgical wound, so that the physician can ensure the wound will not be prone to infection.

Sources: Becker's ASC Review and Ambulatory Surgery Center Association

Industry Development

I'll Take an Amazon Echo Dot and a Spine Screw Removal System

Fusions are common in surgical spine procedures, but there are elevated risks involving complications to the instrumentation that is used. As such, Amazon stepped into the spine market and is now selling its first surgical device through its Amazon Business Professional Healthcare program. The Mahe Medical Spine Emergency Screw Removal System is used to remove fragments of broken or loosened spinal instrumentation. Involved procedure components loosen due to constant mobility and when bones do not heal and fuse together correctly, or when implanted rods and screws wear down — causing screws to break or move out of their proper location.

Amazon's goal is to modify the medical device supply chain and interrupt the antiquated ways of purchasing medical materials. This product is one of the first devices to hit the mass e-commerce world, and certainly won't be the last.

Sources: Becker's Spine Review and SpineUniverse

Join us for thoughtful discussion!

From MRI to MMI:

The ABCs of Complex Orthopedic Bundling (Session #SS3)

Thursday, December 6th, 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

South Pacific J (Mandalay Bay)

Speakers:

Nathan Scoggin, President, Paradigm Specialty Networks

Jonathan Nutt Head of Business Operations, Medical Management Services, AIG

