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GUEST COLUMN

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Most business owners are diligent in complying with the rules and regulations surrounding workers' compensation issues. Most employees use the Family and Medical Leave Act legitimately. Assuming that no one is abusing the

system, it is generally perceived that more impact is felt not by dollars spent, but by productivity lost when employees cannot return to work for a medical reason.

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ONE FACTOR that seems to influence the ability to return to work is recurrent pain. Currently, interventional pain care has become a referral of choice.

2011 GUIDE TO HEALTH CARE

MAKE YOUR HEALTH CARE DOLLARS WORK FOR YOU

How to help employees with pain issues return to work

physical and occupational therapists, orthopedists and chiropractors. For many people, relief is temporary.

Currently, interventional pain care has become a referral of choice. This relatively new area of medicine has many benefits. By applying a medicinal injection, treatment attacks the pain at the site of origin and the relief is often immediate. In addition, treatment also doubles as a diagnostic tool. MRIs, X-rays and physical therapy may all indicate different locations as the course of pain. Interventional techniques confirm or prove wrong previous diagnoses.

PAIN RESOLUTION IS NECESSARY

Persistence of pain is an added detriment, as patient psychology works against the resolution of pain over time. Interventional pain specialists work in combination with physical therapy and home-based programs. If a patient is treated early and begins to feel relief, he or she can resume a normal work life. If pain returns, the patient knows there is relief and will seek it out, minimizing work interruption.

With people extending their work life, more and more employees are considered seniors – in their 60s and 70s – and still work full time. But data shows that older workers are more susceptible to work-related injuries. Interventional treatment administered to the back, neck, shoulder and arms can be applied quickly and effectively, and seniors can find rapid relief much the same as their co-workers half their age.

As benefit managers, human resources professionals and caseworkers have become more aware of interventional pain care, they refer patients sooner than in years past. With referrals coming only months – sometimes just weeks – after the injury, recovery time is dramatically reduced, and employees head back to work far sooner than with traditional means.

The World Institute of Pain brings together the most recognized experts in the field of pain medicine to improve standards of care for patients. The organization's symposia, workshops and programs provide insight on techniques to eradicate pain – which ultimately gets workers back on



the job.

The American Society of Interventional Pain Physicians began in 1998 – just 13 years ago. Its steady rise in membership is indicative of the needs for this type of treatment and success.

Business owners should be aware of interventional pain management not simply as an alternative, but as an immediate suggestion for injured workers. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has significant data about occupational injury and its costs to businesses. By reducing or eliminating pain, employees and businesses can both get back to work.

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