

CCM e-News Brief

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[Compliments of Charlotte Bishop, President, Creative Case Management, Inc.]

Pain Meds. Nationwide, there has been an alarming increase in the number of opioid pain medications prescribed to workers who are injured on the job. EMPLOYERS, America's small business insurance specialist®, has completed the pilot test of an innovative program to prevent the abuse of prescription opioid drugs. The program has dramatically reduced the amount of medically unnecessary opioids prescribed and the time it takes to wean injured workers from them, once prescribed. It has also resulted in millions of dollars of cost savings over the past 18 months. Because the program has proved so successful, EMPLOYERS is now rolling it out on a broader scale. "The Centers for Disease Control has reported that more people are dying from prescription painkillers than from heroin or cocaine," said Stephen V. Festa, executive vice president and chief operating officer at EMPLOYERS. "Opioid addiction decreases worker productivity, makes workplaces less safe, prolongs disability claims, and increases the risk of death from overdoses." Working in collaboration with pharmacy benefit managers, among others, EMPLOYERS has created an information exchange network for workers' compensation physicians. Through this network, doctors can engage in peer-to-peer discussions with other doctors to share ideas about safer, medically appropriate pain management plans in addition to strategies to wean injured employees off of opioid painkillers. EMPLOYERS has experienced success in working collaboratively with participants to promote injured employee safety as well as medically appropriate care.

Benchmarking Illinois. The Workers Compensation Research Institute (WCRI) has released a comprehensive reference report, CompScope™ Benchmarks, 14th Edition, which measures the performance of 16 different state workers' compensation systems, how they compare with each other, and how they have changed over time. "The report is designed to help policymakers and others benchmark state system performance or a company's workers' compensation program," said Ramona Tanabe, WCRI's deputy director and counsel. "The benchmarks also provide an excellent baseline for tracking the effectiveness of policy changes and identifying important trends." The study examines how income benefits, overall medical payments, costs, use of benefits, duration of disability, litigiousness, benefit delivery expenses, timeliness of payment, and other metrics and system performance have changed per claim from 2007 to 2012. The 16 states in the study—Arkansas, California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin—represent nearly 60 percent of the nation's workers' compensation benefit payments. Separate state reports are available for 14 of the 16 study states. Among the major findings Medical payments per claim in Illinois declined, likely due to a reduction in the fee schedule rates. Source:

<http://www.workerscompensation.com/compnewsnetwork/news/17631-new-16-state-benchmarking-study-measures-costs-of-treating-workplace-injuries.html>

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