



OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH **BEST PRACTICES**

— Working together to keep people working —

Surgical Best Practices Pilot Updates

July 2016

Surgical Best Practices Pilot Sites:

COHE Community of Eastern Washington

Pilot Medical Director: Dr. Greg Carter

SHSC: Lisa Archer

*In partnership with:**

**Northwest Orthopaedic & Sports
Medicine** (Proliance), Tri Cities

The Everett Clinic Orthopedics

Pilot Medical Director: Dr. Brent Thiel

SHSC: Robert Minegishi

Proliance Orthopedic Associates

Pilot Medical Director: Dr. Fred Huang

SHSC: Lorraine Sandoval

*In the Next Edition:
Quarterly Pilot metrics
coming to this spot!*

Overcoming long-standing negative perceptions to workers' compensation cases

We recently asked representatives from Northwest Orthopaedic & Sports Medicine in Tri Cities why they chose to participate in the pilot. Michelle Baugher, site manager, says for her it was about overcoming negative perceptions. "There was a feeling that these cases were so much harder. We wanted to change that perception. If you know more about what the end result should look like, it helps everyone stay on track." She is also an advocate of employer and community education "The more you understand the process the better it works. Without Lisa we'd have to carry that burden."

**Inland Neurosurgery & Spine Associates (Providence) also participated in the pilot from December 2014 through June 2016.*

Surgical Best Practices Pilot is improving outcomes for workers in Eastern Washington

COHE Community of Eastern Washington built their surgical best practices pilot in partnership with two separate surgical groups. While it may sound like an impossible idea, it worked. This is no small feat considering neither the Surgical Health Service Coordinator (SHSC) nor the pilot medical director are on staff at either of the participating surgical groups.

Dr. Greg Carter points out that while it would be ideal if the service coordinator could be located within the surgical clinic this isn't always feasible in clinics with fewer injured worker patient populations. He feels the pilot is effective in eastern Washington because the pilot adds Surgical Health Service Coordinators (SHSCs) to support surgical patients, their employers, and surgeons. That's not something that was done in that area of the state prior to COHE's emergence.



Gregory T. Carter, MD, MS

Dr. Carter is the medical director and chief medical officer for St. Luke's Rehabilitation Institute in Spokane. He is also the Medical Director for the COHE Community of Eastern Washington and the Surgical Best Practices Pilot.

Although pilot numbers aren't available yet, things look promising. Dr. Carter and COHE Community of Eastern Washington Executive Director Ben Doornink believe that surgical patient outcomes show improvement. Ben recalled when COHE care coordination was ground to a halt if a worker required surgery. Workers [needing surgery] dropped off everyone's — employers, health services coordinators and L&I — radar even if the worker and employer needed return-to-work help.

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Dr. Carter suggests another hurdle often comes when the worker transitions back to primary care. "Often the non-surgeon has to re-establish trust with the patient, especially after something major like a spinal fusion," states Dr. Carter. "Sometimes it's a matter of instilling confidence when we're advancing restrictions — another place where the SHSC can reinforce the provider's efforts."



COHE Community of Eastern Washington recently celebrated Lisa Archer for her hard work during the first 2 years of the pilot and the recent extension through June 2019.



Lisa Archer, SHSC at COHE Community of Eastern Washington

For more information about the Surgical Best Practices Pilot, contact your SHSC or Carole Horrell, L&I Specialty Best Practices Manager at (360) 902-5080 or e-mail Caroline.Horrell@lni.wa.gov

Or visit our website at <http://www.lni.wa.gov/ClaimsIns/Providers/Reforms/SurgicalPilot.asp>

Calling all Champions!

This is the first experience surgeons in eastern Washington have had with an occupational health care coordinator. That's why this care coordination model is so important – and why it's so challenging.

- Surgeons spend a significant amount of time in surgery, reducing the amount of time they are accessible for SHSC services.
- PA-Cs and ARNPs handle many of the post-op visits – sometimes the surgeon's clinic contact with the patient is only one pre-op and one post-op visit.
- The result is that not all surgeons in the pilot are aware of their SHSC's coordination efforts or the importance of the surgical best practices.

What's the answer? We can overcome the challenge by establishing Best Practice Champions in each of the partner surgical clinics.

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Dr. Carter and Lisa Archer have identified surgeons and mid-level practitioners who are interested in the pilot. They'd be happy to involve more. Does this sound like you? Contact us right away!

How an SHSC overcame obstacles and delays for an injured worker

How did Lisa Archer, an SHSC at COHE Community of Eastern Washington, help an injured worker get the surgery they needed and back to work with their employer? By breaking down communication barriers.

When she reviewed a worker's file, Lisa found a letter written by the worker to L&I. The worker requested COHE help because their surgery was stalled. While the worker's AP requested knee surgery, an employer protest held up approval. That's when Lisa swung into action. First, she resolved the employer's protest. It turns out that the employer protested because of a mis-communication about the first treatment date. Lisa contacted the worker's claim manager and verified the first treatment date based on medical records and the worker's statement. With that resolved, she worked with an L&I resource and the claim manager's supervisor to move up the claim review by three weeks. L&I allowed the claim and the worker went to surgery three days after Lisa's initial contact with the worker. Two weeks after surgery, the worker returned to their employer in a full-time, modified job. All of this happened before the original CM review date. **Great job Lisa!**

Our thanks to Dr. Carter, Ben Doornink, and Lisa Archer.