



Patient Satisfaction Data: A Critical Tool for Workers' Comp Insurers

The workers' comp system has long been fraught with adversarial relationships. Injured workers don't want to be ignored and under-treated, employers and insurers don't want to pay for unnecessary or ineffective treatment, and providers don't want to be unduly restricted when treating their patients.

Yet all parties share the same goal – a timely recovery and safe return-to-work for the employee.

Breakdowns in communication between the parties jeopardize that goal with “delayed treatment, increased litigation, inappropriate care, and unsuccessful return to work,” according to the Workers' Comp Health Initiative.¹

Communication essential to expedite recovery & return to work

To achieve the goal of getting patients better and back to work, communication among patients, employers, providers and workers' comp insurers is a necessity throughout the course of treatment.

One communication tool, the patient satisfaction survey, is important on many levels:

- The act of being given a survey tells the patient that the provider is interested in his/her well-being.
- The survey allows patients to tell providers how well they did their job, empowering patients to play an active role in recovery.
- The survey gives providers feedback on where and how they succeeded with their treatment plan and areas where they need to improve.
- When a provider network requires providers to submit satisfaction data, it helps the network to monitor and improve the quality of therapy services offered.
- Increasingly, insurers and employers are using patient satisfaction data to make contracting and reimbursement decisions.

Patient satisfaction leads to better clinical outcomes

Patient satisfaction has been correlated with a beneficial effect on outcomes. Patients who rated their treatment experience less favorably were 3.5 times as likely to be out of work and receiving disability compensation for their injury 6 or 12 months after filing a claim, compared to patients who rated their treatment experience more favorably, according to a study in *Health Services Research*.²

Other compelling reasons for obtaining patient satisfaction data:

Happy patients are less likely to sue employers and insurers. Patients need to feel providers are interested in their well-being. They need timely and convenient access to care, and need to feel they received sufficient treatment as well as instruction on how to avoid re-injury.

Patient satisfaction data is a valuable component in assessing quality of health care. There is growing interest in analyzing and monitoring patient satisfaction for the purpose of quality improvement. Routine monitoring of patient satisfaction is performed by government agencies, by accrediting bodies such as the National Committee for Quality Assurance, and by private and public healthcare purchasers.

Patient satisfaction is a key measure in pay-for-performance systems. It also serves as a way to align incentives of providers with those of insurers and helps hold providers accountable for their treatment of patients.

PTPN providers earn high patient satisfaction scores

PTPN includes only the most highly qualified therapists, and our patient satisfaction results prove that point.

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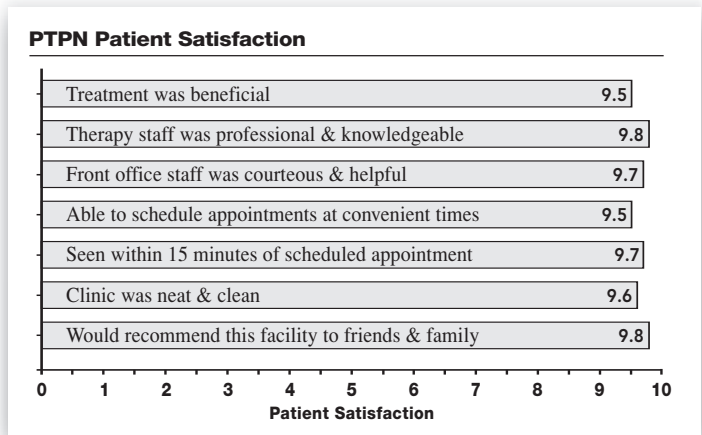
From PTPN, the rehabilitation and workforce productivity experts

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The PTPN Patient Satisfaction Survey allows patients to give us their feedback in a number of key areas. These measures, collected regularly from patients from across the country, allow us to quantify the quality and integrity of PTPN providers. And the results are impressive.

According to 2006 data, PTPN providers have earned a composite patient satisfaction score of 95.4 out of 100.

See graph below for some particularly notable results:



High patient satisfaction scores are vital to alleviating many of the problems plaguing the workers' comp system. Providers who demonstrate superior outcomes in treating injured workers are invaluable partners for employers and insurers striving to lower healthcare costs and improve the well-being of the workforce.

For more information, contact Stephen Moore at smoore@ptpn.com or 800-766-PTPN, or visit ptpn.com.

1 Dembe, A., Himmelstein, J., "The Workers' Compensation Health Initiative: At the Convergence of Work and Health," from "To Improve Health and Healthcare," Volume IV, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Anthology, 2001
2 Wickizer, T., Franklin, G., Fulton-Kehoe, D., Turner, J., Mootz, R., Smith-Weller, T., "Patient Satisfaction, Treatment Experience, and Disability Outcomes in a Population-Based Cohort of Injured Workers in Washington State: Implications for Quality Improvement," Health Services Research, August 2004

This information is provided by PTPN, the nation's first and largest outpatient rehabilitation network. All PTPN providers must be independent practitioners who own their own practices. PTPN's network includes more than 1,300 therapist offices throughout the United States.

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