Workers' Comp

Motoring Toward Recovery

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Field Case Management

Meet Cheri Ratzlow, RN, COHN-S, CCM

Case managers will often tell you they “see miracles happen” in their line of work. What many don’t tell you, however, is the vital role they play in helping workers who survive catastrophic injuries meet their ultimate goal — returning to a functional lifestyle. In her career as a Genex case manager, Cheri Ratzlow, RN, COHN-S, CCM, has certainly had a hand in a few miraculous recoveries.

The Case

An automotive manufacturer employee was test driving a car off the assembly line when the brakes failed. The man jumped out to avoid crashing into a wall, but sustained a severe head injury, skull fractures and subdural hematoma. He was med-flighted to a local trauma center where a craniotomy (surgical opening into the skull) was performed to alleviate pressure on his brain and a plate was placed over the burr holes.

Case Management Impact

Ratzlow coordinated discharge from ICU to rehabilitation center to home, always keeping in close contact with the employee and his wife. This was particularly important when his wife contacted Ratzlow on a Saturday concerned about her husband’s behavior (disoriented, not making sense). The case manager arrived at the injured employee’s home to assess his condition. After determining his symptoms were consistent with infection, she contacted his physician who directed the injured employee go to an emergency room.

Ratzow then followed the couple in her car after the man refused an ambulance. He was diagnosed with an infected metal plate which required a repeat craniotomy be performed on an emergent basis. The physician credited Ratzlow’s quick action to saving the man’s life as the infection was severe and required prompt medical attention. After the injured employee recovered from this second craniotomy, Ratzlow assessed ongoing weakness, dizziness and insomnia which she reviewed with the MD and suggested a referral to a renowned specialized rehab center. She coordinated the admission as well as his outpatient care and worked closely with

the adjuster to facilitate prompt reimbursement of all expenses. Three months after intensive rehab, the employee was released at a significantly higher functional level.

Outcome

Ratzlow worked very closely with all parties to facilitate an appropriate return to work for the injured employee. She incorporated her training as a certified safety engineer (in addition to her nursing skills) to help the man transition back to work in an alternative position with his employer. An amazing result considering the employee’s critical injuries.

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