Workers' Comp

Treating LGBTQ Injured Workers: Gaining Cultural Competence with Chikita Mann

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In part 2 of her podcast on addressing health care disparities based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Genex branch supervisor, Chikita Mann, MSN, RN, CCM, suggests ways workers' comp professionals can build a more inclusive environment to help injured LGBTQ workers return back to their jobs safely and efficiently. For more information on the topic, read Chikita's full article in *Care Management Magazine*, "Cultural Competence and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Patient."

Check out Part 1 to understand health care issues specific to LGBTQ injured workers

Tom Kerr (TK): I'm Tom Kerr. In part one of our podcast on cultural competency and the LGBTQ community, Chikita Mann discussed health care disparities that exist in treating this population. In part two, Chikita will offer insight on how to address these issues.

Chikita, how can workers' comp professionals address trust issues with injured workers in the LGBTQ population?

Chikita Mann (CM): We have to stress the fact that, first of all, they're an individual and they have rights as an individual. They have the right to be treated with respect, they have the right to be treated with dignity, and their lifestyle should not dictate what they have access to in regards to their health.

We have to make sure that we also are doing away with our own biases, because if we have hang?ups, if we have stereotypes, can you truly say that we would be a good advocate for that injured worker?

Let's focus on the fact that this is an individual who wants to go back to work, and we need to do what we can to make sure that they are able to go back to work after they have received the appropriate medical treatment that they need.

When it comes down to it, too, the company's culture really has a lot to do with getting the LGBTQ individual back to work. Sometimes, there may have to be an assessment of the culture of a company. If [LGBTQ individuals] feel that the culture of the company is not accepting of them, you have another brick wall as to trying to get them back to work, because it starts from the organization and it trickles down to the workers.

TK: You say that case managers can play a unique role in helping injured workers in the LGBTQ community return to work. How so?

CM: If you have any of the certifications such as CCM, CRC, or CVMS, it is within the standards of conduct that we have to make sure that we are, first of all, giving respect to the patient regarding their wishes, and that we're showing them dignity, and also that we are willing to be able to step up and say, "This is what this patient needs. This is the medical treatment that they need."

We actually have our certification standing behind us to advocate for us doing that for them.

TK: And what are some strategies to help build a trusting relationship with an LGBTQ worker and a health care provider?

CM: I would reiterate seeing them as an individual, but also understand that, their support system may not be — and I put this in quotation marks — "the norm." When people feel that they are being really treated with respect and with dignity, we're going to get the buy?in that we need from the individual in order to get back to work.

It's even more critical with the LGBTQ individual, that we use the motivational interviewing skills. That process alone is person?centered, and we are letting them know that, "We're here for you. We're going to do our best to help you get the medical treatment that you need," and also it just goes to show that we value them, which, you know, it's a basic human need. Everybody wants to be needed, and everybody wants to be shown that they have value, and if we can do that, that will go a long way with the LGBTQ individual.

TK: Thanks, Chikita. In our next inside workers' comp, we'll introduce you to a real-life Robocop. The story of New Mexico police officer Jeremy Romero is one you won't want to miss. Until, then thanks for listening.

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