



[Workers' Comp](#)

Telemedicine consults add convenience and expanded access for injured workers

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DOWNERS GROVE, IL.—Injured workers will now be able to meet with board-certified physicians by phone or video when their employers participate in Coventry's telemedicine program.

The initiative is part of the company's move to expand provider access and add convenience for injured workers. Telemedicine services, which are becoming widespread among large U.S. employers, have experienced slower adoption for workers' compensation. Coventry is seeking to change that through a number of forays into technology-enabled support.

While telemedicine is underutilized in workers' comp presently, Coventry sees it as a benefit to both the employer and employee. Quick, convenient access to a physician at the time of injury without leaving the worksite being the primary benefit. The National Business Group on Health reports 90 percent of large employers now make telehealth services available to their employees in states in which such services are allowed. The group predicts telehealth will become nearly universal among large employers by 2019.

Coventry's telemedicine program will initially be distributed through the company's 24/7 nurse triage program. When treatment is recommended, Coventry triage nurses will determine if telemedicine is appropriate for the injured worker and offer the injured worker the option to participate in a virtual visit. Nurse triage programs help eliminate guesswork — by workers and their supervisors — in determining appropriate levels of care when treatment is needed. As important, independent studies show access to nurses builds trust between injured workers and their employers. That, in turn, shortens recovery times. Telemedicine can further stimulate such trust by offering timely and convenient access to necessary care.

A referral for a video consult can be a convenient, speedy and affordable alternative to in-person care, according to Tammy Bradly, Coventry's vice president of clinical products. "A video consult can occur from home, the office, or on the go," she said. "While our nurse triage and onsite programs deliver significant reductions by avoiding unnecessary emergency room visits and expensive care, telemedicine is expected to have an even greater impact on employee satisfaction while reducing time away from work and visits to the emergency room or urgent care."

Bradly noted telemedicine also meets an increased demand among younger workers in particular to use technology as a means for obtaining care.

Designing a telemedicine program around the unique needs of workers' comp was a requirement for Coventry, said Kate Farley-Agee, Coventry's senior vice president of provider network programs. The first step was ensuring that physicians conducting phone and video consults were board-certified and occupationally trained with a focus on return-to-work.

"Coventry has spent decades delivering work-comp centric provider networks. We weren't about to do anything short of that here," said Farley-Agee. "The importance of state compliance, guideline-based best practices and electronic transmission of prescriptions to network pharmacies were all factors in the program design, and confirmation of our strategy to start geographically where we felt we had the right combination of elements and then expand nationally."

The initial focus of the telemedicine program is on injury assessment though the company plans to expand services to include ongoing treatment, post-op follow-up and second opinions.

For more information on going virtual with Coventry's Telemedicine Program, please contact info@cvty.com and visit the Coventry Website to read our Telemedicine Whitepaper.

About Coventry

Coventry offers workers' compensation, auto and disability care- and cost-management solutions for employers, insurance carriers and third-party administrators. With roots in both clinical and network services, Coventry leverages more than 30 years of industry experience, knowledge and data analytics.



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