

# Physical Therapy for the Injured Worker

How to Maximize Function  
and Reduce Time Away  
From Work and Costs for the  
Injured Worker

# Agenda

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- Overview of Physical Therapy's Role with Injured Worker
- Positive Impact of Active/Functional Care
- Positive Impact on Cost of Care for Injured Worker

# Who am I?

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- Jonathan Kirsch
  - Husband and father of two beautiful daughters
  - From Pennsylvania
  - Physical Therapist for more than 10 years with three years working exclusively with workers' compensation population
  - Current District Director for Oregon and SW Washington with ATI Physical Therapy



# Physical Therapy's Role with Injured Worker

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# Stakeholders & Goals

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## Non-Workers' Compensation Patients

### Stakeholders:

- Patient
- Referring Physician (if applicable)

### Goals:

- Sleep through night
- Wash/Dress/Cook/Clean
- Drive
- Get on/off floor
- Negotiate stairs
- Return to regular exercise/recreation
- Run a 5K

## VS. Workers' Compensation Patients

### Stakeholders:

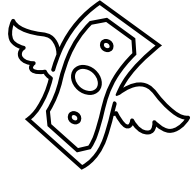
- Patient
- Referring Physician
- Nurse Case Manager
- Adjuster/Payer
- Third-Party Payer/Management Network
- Occupational Med
- Attorney
- Employer

### Goals:

- Return to work

# Physical Therapy's Role with Injured Worker

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Musculoskeletal injuries estimated total costs are \$45 Billion to \$54 Billion



70% of Musculoskeletal injuries referred to Physical Therapy will NOT need additional care



Conservative Physical Therapy as a first line of treatment showed an average of \$1,543 in lower costs

# Physical Therapy's Role with Injured Worker

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## Active Care

Physical Therapy focuses on progressive and active interventions

## Dosage and Frequency

>1.7 visits/week = exceeded outcomes

<1.7 visits/week = fall short

# Positive Impact of Active/Functional Care

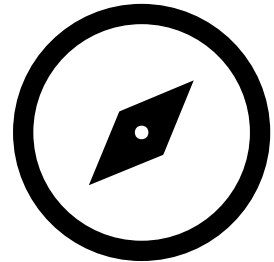
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## Physical Therapy as a Product

- The “product” of Physical Therapy is not the same at every Physical Therapy clinic

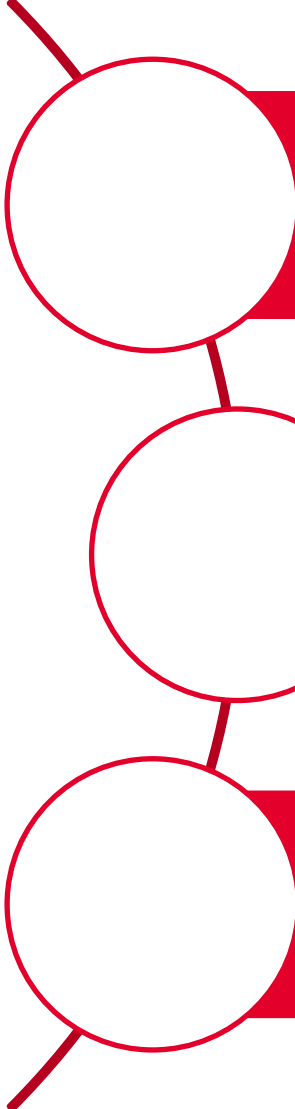
## How do you know if they're getting it right?

1. Documentation of current status and job description
2. Testing of functional lifting and carrying
3. Comprehensive and progressive care
4. Job specific activities





# Keeping it simple...



What are the goal(s) that are preventing the injured worker from returning to work?

Where are we right now on the continuum of attaining those goals?

What is our timebound plan to achieve meaningful progress?

# Positive Impact of Active/Functional Care

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- Every job requires a specific amount of mobility, strength, and endurance to perform
  - Sedentary physical demand level (PDL) – Postural muscles, endurance, ergonomics, mobility for prevention
  - Heavy PDL – Strong prime movers, strength and endurance, body mechanics, ergonomics, mobility for prevention
- Treat the symptoms vs. treat the cause

# Positive Impact of Active/Functional Care

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- Both direct and indirect costs should be considered when addressing a Musculoskeletal case
- Physical Therapy is a conservative treatment option that focuses on full recovery through active interventions and education
- Early access to Physical Therapy can significantly reduce the overall length of a case, reduce the need for additional medical interventions, and therefore significantly reduce the costs of care

# Thank you!

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# Questions?

## REFERENCES:

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