

Written testimony submitted by Ian Belton D.C.

To Whom it May Concern:

This letter is submitted in response to some of the submissions offered at the November 29th, 2010 hearing on Workers' Compensation reform in Illinois.

Since I graduated in 1999 I have chosen to make Workers' Compensation cases the majority share of my patient base. This is partly because I enjoy the challenge of rehabing motivated patients through the stages of an injury and getting them back on track with their lives. But my real motivation for providing for these injured workers comes from all the stories I have heard and from what I see day to day from new patients coming into my practice.

Anybody who is familiar with the Workers' Compensation system knows that there exists a consistent difference in the practice philosophies between "Company Medical Providers" and "Patient-selected Medical providers". From what I have seen in nearly twelve years of private practice, I believe there is no question that the care provided by many of these Company-selected Medical providers is far from what I would expect for myself or my family. All too often injured workers are examined, given a few medications and sent back to work regardless of whether they are truly ready or not. In my early days of building up my practice I promoted myself and my associate, a Medical Doctor, to many Construction companies that were working on huge projects in our area. When we began to receive referrals from these companies the MD told me flat out he would not be referring patients to me for therapy since that would immediately curtail the growing number of referrals our office was getting from these companies. I believe this is a real and true consideration for many company-selected medical facilities and Doctors, not to mention the Independent Medical Examiners that review cases in Illinois. These types of Doctors know where their business comes from and they go to great lengths to minimize patient care in order to protect these valuable referral sources. This is not why I went into Healthcare.

Not only do I believe it is unethical and immoral for these company Doctors to operate under such a philosophy of caring for the employer more than their patient, but I have seen many times where this type of practice model has been reckless and down-right dangerous. In nearly twelve years I have seen countless cases where a patient has failed to improve, has been sent back to regular duty work at Maximum Medical Improvement and then has shown positive findings on an X-Ray or MRI that required surgery, once their condition was appropriately considered by the Patient-selected Physician. This Employer-centered or Employer-directed style of healthcare focuses on minimizing treatment to save costs. The Doctors practice this way to appease those who refer them their patients. This is not quality care and this style of practice does not maximize the effectiveness of the workforce. This style of care only initiates a desire for retribution by the patient against their employer through litigation which, most times, eliminates any chance of the patient returning to work for that employer.

Reform in the Illinois Workers' Compensation system should not come as an Employer-directed and controlled group of company selected Physicians. It is clear from our knowledge of the current system that such control over the minds of all Medical providers would lead only to a poorer quality of care for the patient. As a business owner with nearly thirty of my own employees I can appreciate any company's desire for cost savings in Workers' Compensation. But I believe all employers should look internally at what they can do to reduce the chances of injury within their own premises through risk management, training and promotion of employee physical fitness and health. Without naming names I truly wonder what, if any, means some companies are directing toward injury prevention.

As we all know the Illinois Worker's Compensation system has undergone many changes in recent years such as the addition of Utilization Management. This process is a means for any employer to stop or prevent what they might consider "run-away" treatment plans, while also allowing the Medical provider a forum in which to substantiate the treatment they are providing.

I am hopeful you will consider my input here.

Respectfully,

Ian Belton D.C.