

## Structured Intensive Multidisciplinary Pain Management Program (SIMP)

The Pain Management Program at Northwest Return to Work was set up in 2013 under the direction of our medical director Michael Santoro, MD and our clinical psychologist Jay Skidmore, PhD. The program has a multidisciplinary team of psychologists, physicians, occupational therapists, physical therapists and vocational counselors. The program runs five days a week for 4 weeks in the treatment phase with allowance for follow-up services.

The program incorporates a number of key elements. Firstly, and probably most important, is the general switch from focusing on pain to focusing on a return to function. This includes not only physical performance, but also the normal resumption of every day activities in the home, leisure and work areas. Given our practice focus, the benefits of work and of re-engaging in this occupational role are emphasized.

The **program physicians** review each client's medical history prior to assessment and use this information along with their physical assessment of the client in order to determine the client's medical suitability for the program. The program physician's will also participate in team conferences and help provide medical recommendations throughout the program and at time of discharge. The program physician can also assume the client's claim management during the program and, if needed following the completion of the program. These services can be coordinated with referring physicians and claims managers on an "as needed" basis.

The **occupational therapists** supervise a goal-setting and pacing program, whereby individuals are helped to identify goals and activities to which they wish to return and to do this in a controlled, paced fashion. The hypothesis is that pain need not be a barrier to doing things, and that much of the depression and poor quality of life that often follows chronic pain can be relieved if the individual can re-engage in the occupations that have previously provided fulfillment and which they may have abandoned unnecessarily as part of their chronic pain experience.

The **physical therapists** have a critical role in getting patients, who are very out of condition, in pain and extremely fearful of moving, to return to fitness and strength. This is done with a graded exercise and stretching program which makes good use of the excellent facilities and local walking paths found in and around our treatment center.

The **psychology** sessions focus on the general way individuals make a change, and cognitive aspects relating to thoughts, fears, and beliefs regarding their pain. A lot of time is given to psycho-education, instructing patients on the mechanisms that can be responsible for their pain and addressing their unrealistic fears of re-injury. In addition mind-body relaxation techniques are taught in which individuals are encouraged to gain control of their pain and use the relaxation to reduce muscle tension.

The role of the program **vocational rehabilitation counselor** (VRC) is to assist the injured worker and their private VRC in identifying occupations that are physically appropriate, but also desirable in the eyes of the worker.

The in staff the claim with an assigned vocational counselor and aim to identify the most likely employability recommendation as our client's progress in their treatment and as they reach their vocational goals.

The services provided by our program vocational counselor include the following:

- Explaining the vocational and claim management process
- Facilitating return to work with the employer of record whenever feasible
- Collaborating with claim management stakeholders and providing them with a summary of services
- Providing updated claim information
- Coordinating with client and external vocational counselor to help establish goals for return to work
- Provide additional resources so that our clients can make proactive decisions to re-enter the workforce and or/prepare for retraining, if eligible.

We also strive to reduce return to work barriers and prepare workers for a return to work transition plan that results in claim closure and reintegration into the workforce. Supplemental services may also be provided to improve return to work outcomes and help meet the needs of our clients. These services may include, but are not limited to:

- Job search assistance
- Retraining goal research
- ESL referral/enrollment
- Referrals to WorkSource/Employment agencies
- Identification of alternative medical insurance