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May 4, 2017

Industrial Commission of Arizona
Attn: Chairman Schultz, Commissioners and Ms. Kurth
1800 W. Washington Avenue, Suite 305
Phoenix, Arizona 85007-2922
Jacqueline.Kurth@azica

Dear Chairman Schultz, Commissioners and Ms. Kurth,

As the managing partner of Sonoran Orthopaedic Trauma Surgeons (SOTS), on behalf of our organization and an advocate for the injured worker, I'm writing to express our deepest concern over the proposed fee schedule change before the Industrial Commission of Arizona for Physicians and Pharmaceutical reimbursement for 2017/2018.

SOTS is the largest fellowship trained orthopaedic trauma surgeons group in the Valley. Our surgeons are on the front lines and provide immediate medical/surgical care for the injured worker. We have personally seen and experienced first-hand the challenges faced by the injured worker in finding highly qualified professionals to handle on-going care without compromising a positive outcome and ability to return to work.

The injured worker patients we treat during life changing or life alternating times is fundamentally different in terms of communication and follow-up than those we treat on an elective basis. The communication we must provide to the employer, employee, family member, case worker etc. seems at times limitless. The requirements for a worker's comp patient requires a high degree of hand holding, knowledge of case management, follow-up, large volume of phone calls, increase level of paperwork and a subject matter expertise that many of our colleagues frankly do not desire nor have time to acquire and treat. Bulleted below are some additional highlighted requirements that Physicians must undertake when treating an injured worker verse a typical elective surgical case for a commercial payor:

- Causation
- Functional embellishment
- Permanent & Stationary status
- Permanent Impairment Ratings
- Return to Work Status
- Case Management Communication
- Disability Assessment
- FMLA Application

The Valley currently has highly qualified orthopedic surgeons but many do not take worker's comp patients due to the additional educational training, highly specialized assessment requirements, on-going communication needs, follow-up and lack of compensation for the additional work performed.

We currently live in an environment where unfortunately volume is critical for success and sustainability of a private practice. Many that treat workman's comp patients have truly made a conscientious decision to adjust their practice to treat this class of patients out of the high degree of need, the large void of outstanding providers and fair compensation.

Reducing the compensation fee schedule while maintaining the current provider list that accept worker's comp patients coupled with maintaining the current paperwork and assessment requirements is a false premise. The injured worker will have even more limited choices on who they will be able to see for their healthcare needs should the Commission accept the proposed change.

Additionally, I would implore that you to speak to your own staff that currently is struggling to find highly qualified physicians who fundamentally understand the workman's comp requirements. The feedback that we have experienced from your staff directly is that of frustration based on limited resources and providers.

We strongly request your re-evaluation of the recent proposed change before the Commission and take into consideration a slower approach to change on an incremental basis verse one giant leap in a different direction over the current fee schedule. We support Mr. Older, Executive Vice President of Arizona Medical Association concept of a "stop-loss" approach.

Additionally, we agree with the Commissions proposed change in methodology to a RBRVS system for data tracking proposes.

We welcome further dialog and discussion on the potential impact of the proposed change and willing to meet in person to discuss first-hand what is required to provide outstanding care to the worker's comp patient.

Thank you for the opportunity to place our letter in the formal record and your reconsideration of the fee schedule change.

Wishing you the best during your deliberations. The decision before the Commission comes with a heavy burden and your decision could materially effect and impact the future care for injured workers in Arizona.

Regards,



Anthony Rhorer, MD
Founding Member & Managing Partner
Sonoran Orthopaedic Trauma Surgeons