



“Ask Dr. J”



The “Ask Dr. J” columns are authored monthly by Jennifer Christian, MD, MPH, President of Webility Corporation. See previous columns at www.webility.md.

Dr. J's columns also appear in the monthly Bulletin of the Disability Management Employer Coalition (DMEC). To purchase a book of Dr. J's collected columns, go to www.dmec.org.

The columns often summarize issues discussed by the Work Fitness and Disability Roundtable, a free, multi-disciplinary e-mail discussion group moderated by Dr. Christian. Apply to join the Roundtable at www.webility.md.

October 2005 – ACOEM Survey of Employers & Payers

Dear Dr. J:

Who explains workplace realities to doctors? Who shows them the impact that bad medical care or poor communications can have on lost workdays, disrupted productivity, and rising benefit costs for employers and their workers' comp and disability insurers? I understand you teach doctors how to prevent needless disability, and I've heard you speak to employers and insurers, telling us how things look from the doctor's vantage point. But aren't you a lone voice crying in the wilderness? In every state I've worked in, it's like there is no real communication between healthcare providers and employers except the data on bills and physical exam forms and return to work slips.

Chris in Casper

Dear Chris:

Because I think employers and payers have opinions that doctors need to hear, let me tell you about an email survey that you or some of the people you work with may want to participate in.

The purpose of the survey is to assist the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) in learning more about the current practices, priorities, and point of view of those who pay for and use occupational medical services. ACOEM is a medical specialty society whose members are mostly physicians.

If a lot of people respond to this survey, it will give ACOEM a better picture of how employers and payers see things, will enable ACOEM to teach its member physicians what has been learned, and will provide the basis for more dialogue with employers and payers in other settings. All of these things should help improve the occupational health, workers comp and disability benefits systems.

In particular, ACOEM wants to learn how company managers and executives in organizations are currently viewing a few major issues in organizational and occupational health. ACOEM

also wants to hear what companies look for when choosing physicians to provide either hands-on or consulting medical services for their workers compensation and disability programs.

Take the survey yourself at www.crescendocg.com/surveys/acoem.htm if you:

- want to improve the availability, quality, usefulness, and value of occupational health/medical services in the future,
- purchase (or influence the purchase of) occupational medicine services for your organization, or
- manage relationships with medical service providers for your company.

Feel free to forward this email on to other appropriate people in your organization. Decision-making in large organizations often is not centralized, and ACOEM desires input from as many people in your organization as you feel are appropriate. (If you know people in other organizations who might be interested, pass this invitation along to them, too.)

The survey is being conducted by Crescendo Consulting Group, a national research and consulting firm based in Portland, ME. Results will go directly to Crescendo Consulting Group to preserve anonymity. The survey should take less than 15 minutes of your time. Individual responses will be kept confidential. In exchange for participation, ACOEM will provide an executive summary of results to any participants who supply contact information. Again, you can find it at www.crescendocg.com/surveys/acoem.htm

This survey is but one of several national level activities currently underway at ACOEM to build a system-level communication bridge between the healthcare professions and employers and insurers. At the state and local community level, more will be required. Stay tuned for more on this topic.

In the meanwhile, get a bunch of your colleagues in businesses, companies, factories, and insurance companies to tell ACOEM about the usefulness, availability, quality and value of occupational medical services from their point of view!

Smiling,
Dr. J

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