

Special Care Services: WorkSafeBC's resource for severely injured workers

If you have a patient who has suffered a traumatic workplace injury or is dealing with a serious, work-related mental disorder, he or she will likely fall under the care of a WorkSafeBC group called Special Care Services. Here is some information about this group and what it does.

What is the role of Special Care Services?

WorkSafeBC's Special Care Services reviews complex injury claims and actively assists with their medical management. This group's six main areas of focus are spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, amputations, serious injuries, mental health claims, and medication review under the Medication Review Team.

What does each group do?

- Spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries (moderate or severe), and amputations teams: Each of these teams has dedicated medical advisors with specific backgrounds, experience, or special training in understanding the pathology and medical management of workers with these types of injuries. They have specific knowledge of social, vocational, and medical challenges related to these injuries and frequently liaise with neurosurgeons, neurologists, physiatrists, and other clinicians.
- Serious injuries team: This team handles the approximately 900 injured workers whose functioning is permanently impaired by 75% or more. Examples of such workers are those with serious burns, major electrocutions, near total blindness, mul-

tiples traumas, and severe spinal cord injuries. Fortunately, only a small number of newly injured workers meet these criteria each year (eight in 2014). However, each worker assigned to this team requires ongoing, individualized services, and lifelong management. The type of care this

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team provides ranges from acute injury management, through subacute stages of rehabilitation, to home-care services, regardless of whether the worker is living in a modified home or care facility. The team provides for and manages all aspects of the worker's ongoing needs, including initiatives that support a meaningful and productive life following the injury.

- Mental Health Claims Unit: This group provides services to workers with accepted claims for a mental disorder resulting from one or more work-related traumatic events, or predominantly caused by one or more significant work-related stressors, including workplace bullying or harassment. Medical advisors in this unit include physicians with psychiatry training and a team psychiatrist with a detailed understanding of work-related mental health conditions and return-to-work planning.
- Medication Review Team: This group deals with workers on higher doses of opioid medications who may be difficult for family physicians and medical specialists to manage. Medical advisors have the

specialized training and expertise to address opioid dependence, chronic pain, and addiction issues. They typically review claims of injured workers on opioid levels exceeding 120 mg MEDD (morphine equivalent daily dose) and can refer workers to support services, such as addiction assessments and chronic pain programs.

For all teams the main goal is to improve the quality of life for injured workers. Specialized teams provide the resources to achieve this goal in a realistic and concerted way.

WorkSafeBC recognizes the complexity of these injuries and the large number of physicians, clinicians, and support workers who may be involved in the care of a worker. A major strategy for addressing this complexity is to ensure all treatment providers have access to key information, and to coordinate the sharing and transfer of knowledge and data among relevant providers.

What resources are available to you if your patient's claim falls into one of the above categories?

WorkSafeBC medical advisors on the teams cited above will frequently contact attending physicians to discuss relevant issues. But treating physicians, including specialists, can also contact these medical advisors directly to discuss concerns or provide suggestions for optimal care. To reach the appropriate medical advisor, please contact WorkSafeBC's medical advisor info line at 1 855 476-3049, Monday through Friday, between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

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This article is the opinion of WorkSafeBC and has not been peer reviewed by the BCMJ Editorial Board.