

Working with a Competent Physician Provider

After 25 years in practice I look back and think of that old cliché “The more things change the more they stay the same”. Don’t misunderstand me; much has changed in the last quarter century. Managed care has strangled private practice doctors, health care costs have continued to sky rocket, patients receive high tech examinations yet lower quality care and attorneys work much harder for smaller settlements. Yes, much has changed over the years, and most, not for the better. In this newsletter, I will break from my usual academic format and share some observations and do some philosophizing.

Something that hasn’t changed over the years is that competent doctors and lawyers continue to provide superior services, despite the changing environment. Yes, those of us who maintain a high level of service philosophy have made adaptations but never at the expense of quality. We have maintained that success comes from happy clients/patients and that good service over time results in greater referrals from these happy clients. We have not stooped to extreme measures although we have become creative in our marketing and management styles. One of my very good friends shared with me his philosophy of marriage “Happy wife, happy life” and I fully agree. The same is true of our patients and clients. So, as long as they continue to receive services they can rely on, they will be happy and continue to refer.

So what does all this have to do with the title of this newsletter? I reflect over the quarter century and it has been my experience that working with a network of health care providers and lawyers that understand a service philosophy results in the improved health of our practices. In other words, who we associate with professionally defines who we are professionally. Over the years, I have worked with nearly every lawyer and doctor in Central Connecticut. What I’ve seen is that those service providers who offer exceptional services are still doing relatively well. Specifically, as it relates to the services from doctors of chiropractic, you should look for doctors that:

1. Put the patient’s health care first yet can still coordinate care with consideration of the case dynamics and financial implications.
2. Charge reasonable fees and understand that flexibility and compromise may be necessary from time-to-time to make a settlement happen.
3. Do not try to impress you with their car, boat, plane, house, fancy dinners, etc. Instead, they impress you with their education, clinical knowledge, case management skills and respect they show for the difficulties you have as an attorney in helping your clients achieve a satisfactory outcome.
4. Are not looking for the latest gimmick to carve more out of the patients settlement (under the guise of “it’s better for the case”, as if they know better than you)
5. Don’t practice law. They practice good medicine with an appreciation of the medical legal considerations and consequences of their actions.
6. Have well established, mutually respectful, working relationships with the medical community so that your clients receive the appropriate medical care for their injuries.

7. Are committed to treating injured patients as their specialty. They don't dabble in traumatic injury management when it's convenient and then go back to their suburban offices to see their "preferred" patients.
8. Won't just open an office in a community and staff it with poorly trained and unsupervised physicians. Rather, they are actively involved in every aspect of the patient management.
9. Are ready, willing and able to testify when necessary. As a result, they document thoroughly so that when they are called upon for expert testimony, they can do so effectively (and not charge so much that it's financially impossible to bring them to court for deposition for expert testimony)
10. Have professional reputations with their peers and other attorneys that are consistent with your standards for your clients.
11. Won't "sell out". With competition and financial constraints increasing, some doctors have lowered their ethical standards by promising results and report content that cannot be ethically or professionally delivered. Be careful of the doctor that asks what you want in the reports beyond recommendations for report style (ie. impairments, bills). Any doctor that will offer to do more than modify report style and structure is an investigation waiting to happen.

At the end of the day, you want to work with chiropractors that are professional, ethical, and easy to speak with. Probably the most important part of the relationship is that you have a relationship. You should be able to call the doctor (on their cell) and speak to them as if you are working for a common goal and not working against each other. That relationship comes from trust and experience.