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Stuck in the middle: The experiences of case managers in personal injury compensation systems

Associate Professor Alex Collie

Chief Research Officer & Acting CEO, ISCRR

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Case management as an intervention

- Arnetz et al (2003). J Occ Enviro Med.
- Swedish social accident insurance system
- Integrated case management intervention
 - Engaged injured worker, case manager, workplace supervisor, OT, physio, physician
 - Workplace assessment, work accommodation, physical therapy and rehabilitation, education and training, psychosocial issues.
 - Visit to workplace and insurance office (case manager, OT, injured worker)

Case management as an intervention

TABLE 3

Mean Sick Days during 0–6 Months, 6–12 Months, and the Entire 12-Month Study Period by Intervention and Reference Group, Respectively, as Well as Total Reimbursement from the National Health Insurance Plan During the Study Period

| Variable | Intervention Group | Reference Group | P Between Groups |
|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Sick days 0–6 months | 110 (6,5) | 131.1 (5.9) | <0.05 |
| Sick days 6–12 months | 95.8 (13.1) | 150.3 (8.8) | <0.01 |
| Sick days 0–12 months | 144.9 (11.8) | 197.9 (14.0) | <0.01 |
| Total reimbursement from the health insurance system/Skr (USD equivalents) | 57,564 (4524) 9,600 (754) | 73,178 (5805) 12,196 (970) | <0.05 |

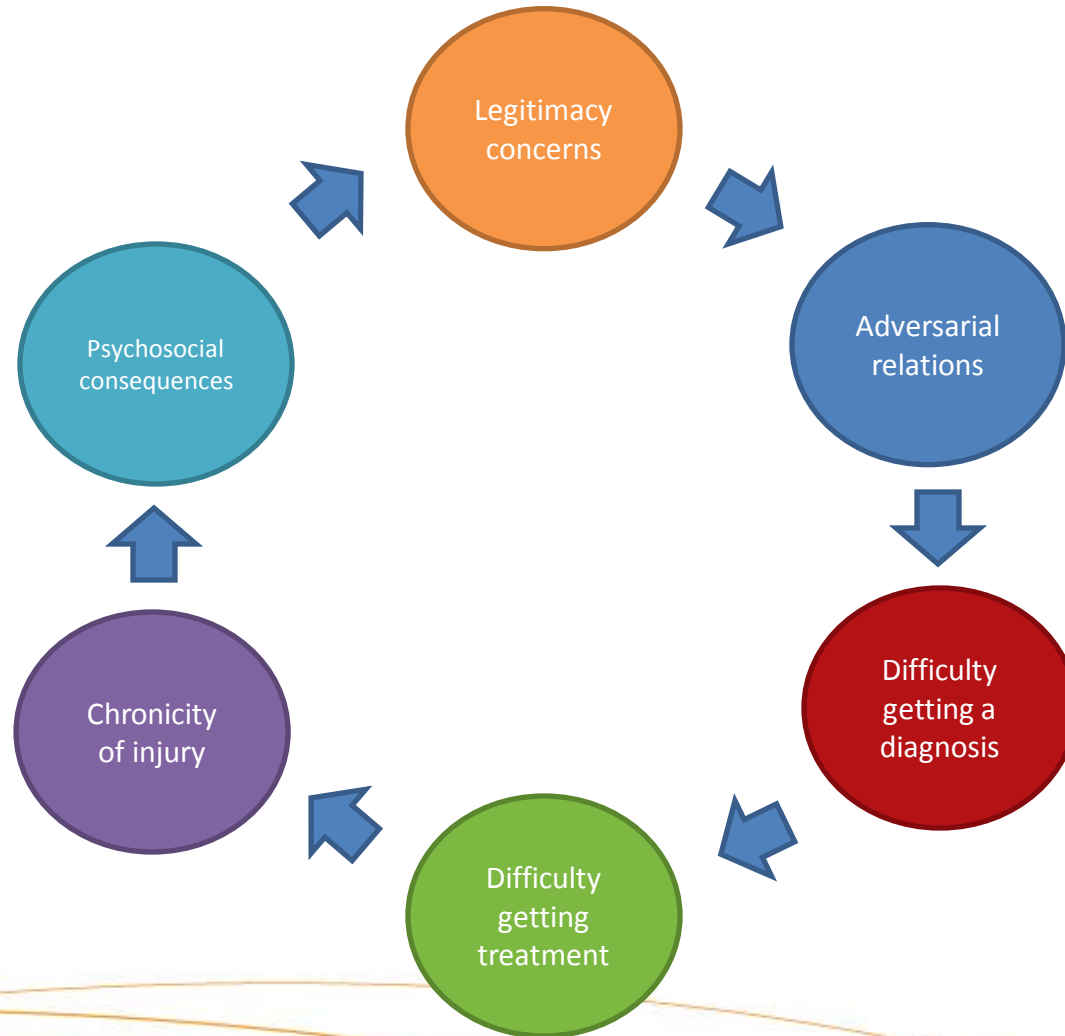
Mean (S.E.M.) days and Swedish Crowns, skr, respectively/person.

The potential impact of case manager – injured person interactions.

“My case manager didn’t tell me anything or help me with the process - I knew nothing about travel claims, rehabilitation, work training or physiotherapy they just send out the same letters to everyone letters sent by case managers were threatening - the pressure was unnecessary and I would have healed quicker without it - the boundaries of the return to work process need to be explained - the lack of information is very stressful.”

Roberts –Yates 2003 p902

Findings from a systematic review of injured person – case manager interactions



Case management in an insurance model

“In the field of work injury rehabilitation, case management is a collaborative process which includes evaluating, planning, implementing, coordinating and monitoring the options and services required to meet injured workers’ health and work-related service needs.”

Lu & Xu (2007). *Work* 30; 47-53.

- While containing claim costs, managing relationships with multiple parties (often with competing interests), navigating complex regulation and policy, and working within rigid organisational processes.

A case manager?



Summary

- Case management is THE critical interface between the injury scheme and the injured person.
- If done well, can lead to very positive outcomes.
- If done poorly, can lead to very negative outcomes.
- It is a very difficult job.
- Where is the evidence base for current injury compensation case management practice?

The Logic of Practice: An Ethnographic Study of Front-line Service Work with Small Businesses in Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

Working Paper #346

April 9, 2009

Joan M. Eakin (1)
Ellen MacEachen (2)
Elizabeth Mansfield (3)
Judy Clarke (4)

Objective

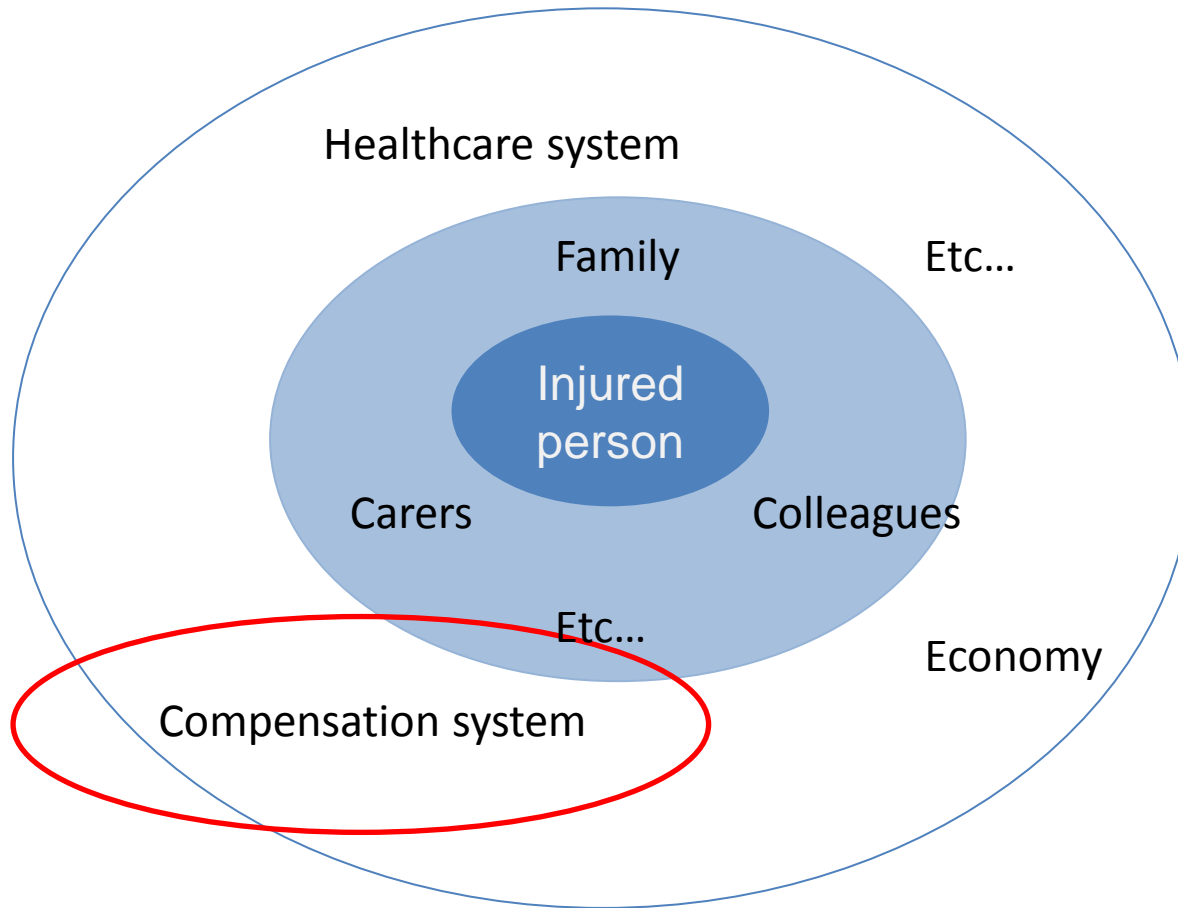
- Understand the impact on case managers of their interactions with other parties in the compensation system.

ARC industry linkage project

- Title: Determining the individual, community and societal impact of compensable injury in Australia (2011 to 2014: \$548k)
- Setting: Personal injury compensation system (workers' compensation and motor vehicle accident compensation).

| Phase | Description | Status |
|-------|---|----------|
| 1 | Review of injury outcomes literature | Complete |
| 2 | Qualitative study of injured persons, family members, injured persons, healthcare practitioners, compensation scheme personnel | Complete |
| 3 | Case studies to examine interactions between those involved in injury compensation | Underway |

Measuring the burden of injury?



Sample

- 3 x focus groups in 3 different systems:
 - 2 x workers compensation / 1 x motor vehicle accident scheme
 - 2 x in-house case management / 1 x outsourced case management
- 21 case managers:
 - 8 male / 13 female
 - 13 front line staff / 8 claims team leaders
 - Avg 5 years experience in role (range 5 months to 20 years)

Focus groups

- 5 open ended questions, informed by WHO ICF framework
 - Body structure, Body function, Activity, Participation, Environmental factors
- “How does the injured person’s access to other services or support influence your interaction with the injured person?”

Data Analysis

The data was analysed using thematic analysis.

1. Open coding: identifying themes based on a broad search for possible concepts whereby each new idea was coded.
2. Fragments of dialogue within each theme were coded based on relevance to a personal impact on the participant.
 - eg., quotes in which participants elicited a response that indicated an impact on their interaction with injured persons were retained in the final data set.
3. Reliability check: 95% agreement between raters.

Themes

- Extra-role behaviour
- Frustration
- Emotional commitment
- Stress
- Defensiveness/anger
- “Stuck in the middle”

Extra-role behaviour

“If they know that they could be entitled to a pay out, could possibly hinder their recovery for rehab, not wanting to access services. Makes our job quite difficult, trying to motivate them and get them moving. Particularly if they’ve got people around them telling them, don’t do anything because you might get a payout.”

(Female participant, MVCS)

Complexity

“One of the complications, you can get those that access to a range of different services or interactions with different people as a circle becomes wider and wider in terms of the number of services or people that are workers interacting with it, it becomes more difficult to have everyone on the same page in terms of the outcome that everyone’s hoping to achieve with the worker which should be return to work and return to independence.”

(Male participant, WCS1)

Frustration (and dependence on health providers)

“And in the end you sort of go, okay I'm at capacity with this, I don't know where else to go. I'm not getting the information. So you may make the choice to deny [the claim] until I get further information... it's quite frustrating because you think gee there's a person there that may need something.”

(Female participant, MVCS)

Stress

“When they don’t go back to work that puts a lot of pressure on the case managers because there’s certain expectation that if you’ve just got a broken ankle you’ll be back at work within ten weeks and then the pressure that you potentially could be putting on that case manager going well why aren’t they back at work?”

(Female participant, WSC2)

Emotional attachment

“I’ve seen case managers get, through no fault of their own but have quite a close relationship with their injured workers and sometimes it’s difficult to remove yourself from that so then the extent of whatever their condition or injury is can impact on them at a personal level because they’ve become quite involved with them. And it’s hard to say not have that empathy for somebody. But it’s when you start feeling, actually having sympathy and stuff, feeling sorry for them that it can impact on how you manage that claim.”

(Female participant, WSC2)

Frustration/anger & solicitors

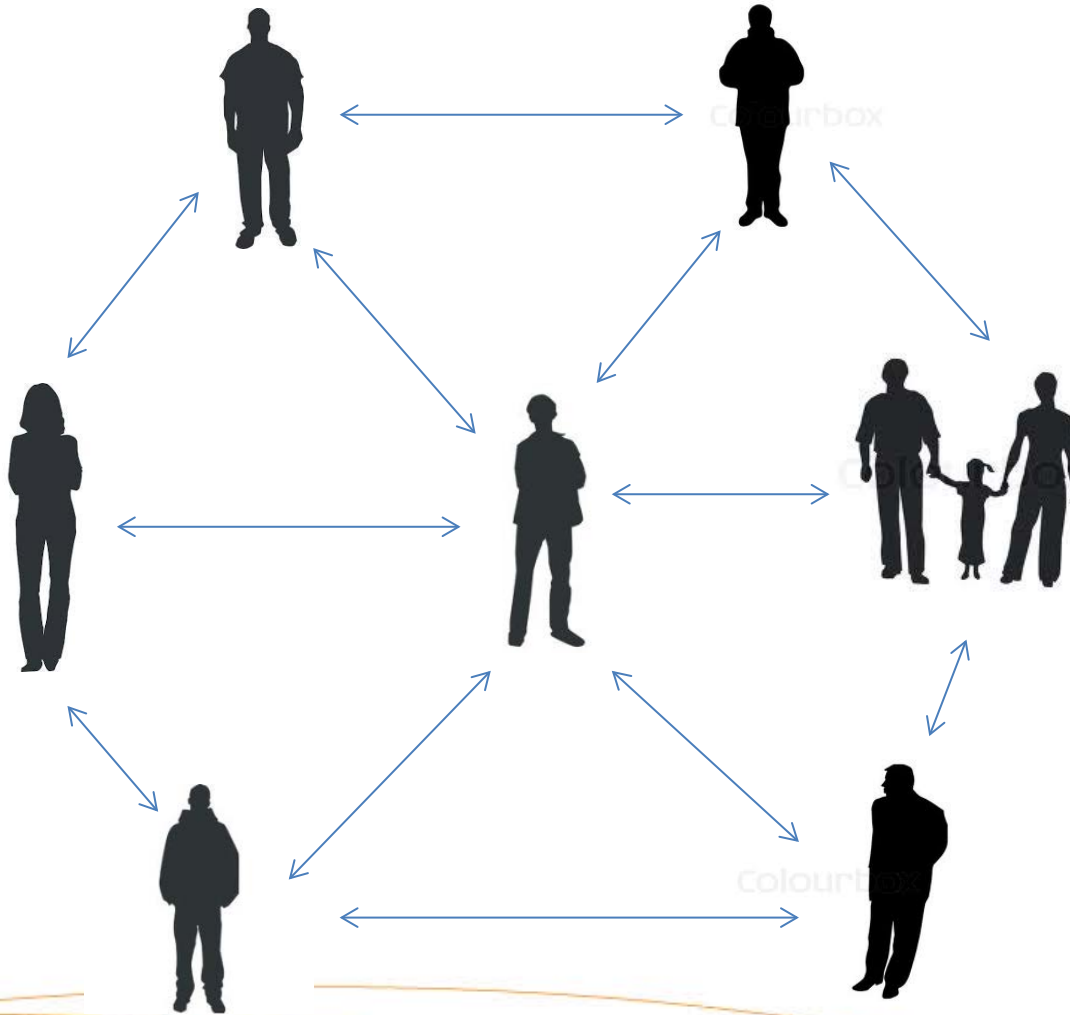
“But I think that the solicitors, I think we all want the best for clients but their definition of that is different. Their definition is maximising entitlements and if they do that, they’ve done a great job. And they are taught that from day one at law school so it’s just getting the same definition I think.”

(Female participant, MVCS)

“I get really angry when I see them, really angry. Like I get really fired up.... I must articulate it a lot because now when my children are in the car, I turn it on, oh mum it’s those [name of solicitor firm].”

(Female participant, MVCS)

Stuck in the middle



Some solutions (offered during the focus groups)

- Face-to-face interaction with clients and other parties.
- Education and training to improve skills.
- Development and use of evidence based guidelines for decision making.
- Improve relationships between case manager and team leaders / senior management.
- Review performance metrics of regulators.

SUMMARY

- Case managers play a critical role in personal injury compensation systems.
- There is currently no agreed 'best practice'.
- There is very little research evidence in the field.
- This study illustrates the complexity of the role and some of its negative impacts on staff.

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