



SYNOPSIS

RISK PROFILES OF WORKERS COMPENSATION CLAIMANTS: THE PACE PROTOCOL

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Purpose of your paper: Early intervention is acknowledged as best practice in management of complex claims. The PACE tool designed to assist case managers to address risks in the first two weeks of a workers compensation claim.

Synopsis: Factors beyond the injury itself can lead to workers compensation claims extending beyond expected timeframes. An unsupportive manager, a worker with underlying anxiety problems or a general practitioner writing inappropriate certificates can all delay a return to work. The longer a worker remains off work, the greater the risk the claim will result in poor outcomes for the worker, employer and insurer. Early intervention to address risks associated with a claim is acknowledged as best practice in claims management, however case managers need assistance to identify the risks that may influence a claim and return to work.

The Plan of Action for a CasE (PACE) tool was developed to identify a range of risks within the first two weeks of claim lodgement, and help case managers identify an appropriate intervention pathway. Risks captured by the tool include worker-related factors, employer-related factors and injury/treatment related factors. Intervention pathways were related to the nature of the injury (mental/physical), workplace support or mediation, expectation setting, psychosocial complications and support for the worker at home.

The PACE tool was completed for 535 claims between August 2016 and March 2017, applied in an intervention (285 claims) and control setting (250 claims where no recommendations for action were made). The PACE data set will allow a full evaluation of the impact of risk identification on claim outcomes, one of the few studies of this kind conducted in a compensation environment.

This paper will identify the most common risks present in claims lasting more than two weeks, including combinations of risks commonly seen in time-loss claims. It will also outline the challenges in changing case manager practice to collect the types of information required to identify risks in a claim and the supports required to do so.