

NEVER SAY QUIT

Medical Management Case Study

ADVANTAGE
WORKCOMP SERVICES

Anyone who knows Don McNulty would say he's as stubborn as a mule. And it was a spooked, yet stubborn, mule that changed his life forever.

A former predator hunter for the Utah State Department of Agriculture, McNulty was riding a young mule in 1997 that suddenly reared from fright, knocking McNulty to the ground and then dragging him 50 yards down the trail. The resulting injuries have forced McNulty to live as a tetraplegic, but he hasn't let his disability keep him from living life to the fullest.



"I love life, love the outdoors, and wanted to continue in that lifestyle," McNulty says. "Quit never was in my vocabulary."

Immediately following his injury, McNulty received invaluable support from his wife, children and, surprisingly to him, his workers' compensation case manager at Advantage.

"Advantage's medical case manager became a part of my rehab team from the start," McNulty says. "She was one of the few people who understood that yesterday I was standing, and today I'm not."

Carol Ann Webb, McNulty's medical case manager, is a registered nurse certified in rehabilitation and case management. She has

worked for more than a decade helping those like McNulty who have suffered life-changing injuries. Webb says McNulty's determination and positive attitude have helped him adjust to his new circumstances.

"Don didn't go through the major depression that many people go through after suffering detrimental, severe injuries," Webb says. "He's always been upbeat and he has worked hard to maximize his potential. I have seen others who have locked themselves in their bedrooms, wishing they had died."

Webb has been by McNulty's side from day one of the accident. During his nine-week hospital stay, she ensured he received the appropriate health

care his condition required. Upon his release, she helped him through physical therapy and assisted him in his follow-up doctor visits. Through Advantage, he was provided with a wheelchair and an electric seat extension, hand controls and a remote-controlled wheelchair crane on his truck.

"I see my role as an advocate for the injured worker," Webb says. "We want to make sure they get the appropriate care."

Appropriate care, however, does not mean Advantage does not try to control costs. Advantage saves its clients millions of dollars annually by identifying medical treatments that were not necessary for the injured patient's recovery. Even stronger savings are achieved by coordinating its purchases and distribution of medical service equipment, such as in-house hospital beds, wheelchairs and homecare supplies.

While these programs help Advantage control costs, they also ensure the necessary costs are directed toward the functionality and employability of the injured worker.

Webb is only one facet of Advantage's medical management and rehabilitation group. Along with medical case managers, Advantage's vocational rehabilitation counselors work with an injured employee and their employer to eventually return them to the same or modified job. If the injury makes it impossible to return to the same position, Advantage facilitates a training program for the injured worker and helps them find new employment.

"The longer people stay off work, the more likely they'll never return," Leigh Ann Havas, vice president of medical management and rehabilitation says. "We understand that the best way to help

injured workers get their dignity back is to get them back to work."

Advantage also sponsors a "Return to Work" workshop to teach employers how to reduce premiums and increase profits and productivity by implementing a company-sponsored return to work program.

"While most employers accept that workers' compensation costs are a price of doing business, some haven't accepted that effectively dealing with the injured worker after the injury is also part of that price," says Don Martin, manager of vocational rehabilitation and coordinator of the seminar. "A return to work program can reduce the cost of lost time due to injuries and keep an injured employee contributing to an organization."

Advantage's vocational counselors proposed a number of career options for McNulty, including a retraining program on computer technology. McNulty refused and came up with his own far-fetched, but creative plan.

Doggedly resistant to giving up his outdoor life, McNulty is now the founder of Horizon Adventures, which provides guiding and on-site camp facilities for the physically challenged who want a camping and hunting experience. He is also a popular speaker at rehabilitation centers, providing encouragement and hope to those coping with life-changing disability.

"What better way to help people cope with their injuries than by showing people who think life has gone down the tube that they are limited only by imagination and determination," McNulty says. ▲

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