

# First Source

News from First Rehabilitation Resources, Inc.



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## ISSUE 34 SPRING 2015

Editor: Sarah Gervasi

## Innovative Prosthetics with Amazing Potential

Containing Excerpts from: 'OpenBionics' Open Source Robotic Prosthetic Hand can Execute 144 Different Grasps & Costs Under \$200' by Eddie Krassenstein, *3D Print.com*; 'New prosthetic provides better fit for amputees' by Cheryl V. Jackson, *Providence Journal*; 'While smarter watches make life easier, smarter prosthetics make life better' By Brian Heater, *Digital Trends*

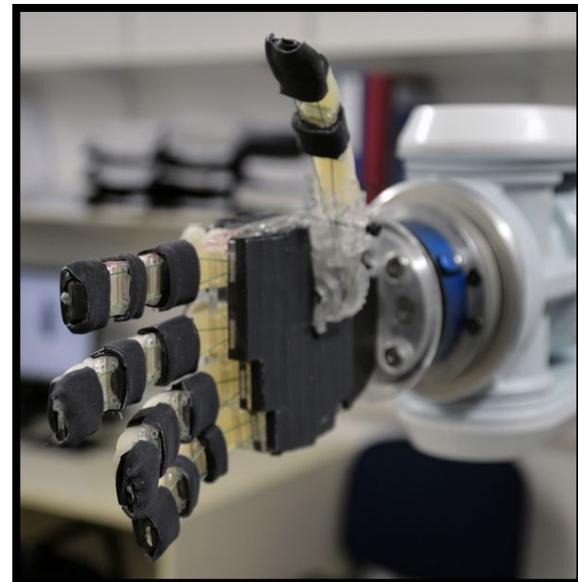
It is no surprise that the loss of a limb due to work injury is likely to result in a claim of immense complexity and cost. Providing care for a worker who has been through such a traumatic experience is no easy task for any involved parties. However, it seems technology may be at the forefront of making the process of recovery a little easier, and maybe even less expensive.

When you think of wearable technologies, the first thing that comes to mind is likely a watch that doubles as a cell phone or a wristband that tracks your exercise. You may not have realized that some of those same technologies, as well as new advances in 3D Printing, are greatly impacting the development of more advanced prosthetics for those with lost limbs.

The process of applying existing technology to prosthetics is astounding. There are legs which connect via Bluetooth to an app on a smartphone which controls the leg's functioning. The technology allows complex functioning such as easy transition between different types of walking surfaces and assistance in lifting between sitting and standing. These changes can be not just the difference between sedentary and mobile, but even out-of-work and return-to-work.

Perhaps the greatest leap lately in the advancement of prosthetics involves the process of 3D Printing. Custom prosthetics are now more advanced, more integrated with the body, and the cost can be dramatically reduced. OpenBionics has created a 3D Printed hand with almost 150 different grasps that costs less than \$200 to make. Compare that with prosthetics that currently cost thousands of dollars and the cost savings become immediately apparent.

The application of such prosthetics has not been widely studied in relation to workers' compensation claims but it will be exciting to watch the progress in coming years as the technology becomes more readily available.



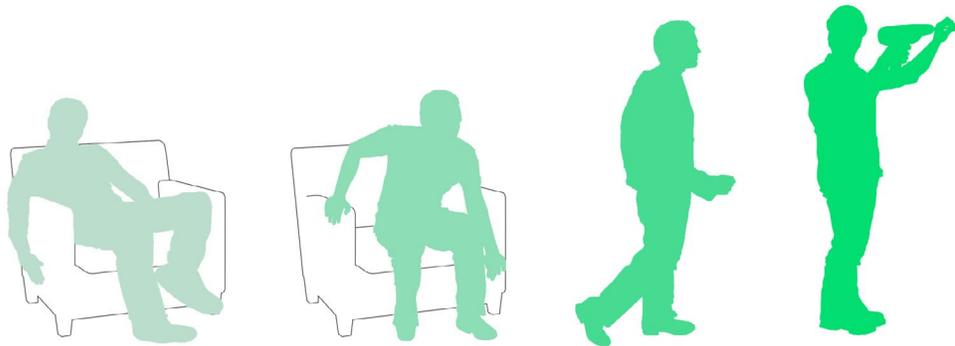
# Managing the Transition- Return to Full Duty Faster

*A transitional period of light-duty work, or even off-site volunteering, has been shown effective in helping Injured Workers get back to full-duty faster.*

A Transitional Duty program is appropriate for employees with occupational or non-occupational disabilities where the employee has been released to modified duty and would benefit from a short-term transitional assignment OR the employee is participating in a vocational rehabilitation program and would benefit from the demands of a work environment. By placing Injured Workers at local non-profit organizations to perform light duty work when their employer cannot accommodate their physical restrictions on-site, the transitional program provides numerous benefits...

## For the Injured Worker:

- Engage in meaningful and productive work activity as soon as they are released to modified or light duty
- Keep a flexible work schedule to accommodate medical appointments, and perhaps job search
- Focus on abilities, as opposed to limitations
- Develop a physical tolerance for work, including strength and endurance
- Learn new, transferable skills
- Retain their employee status with the company and continue earning a paycheck and benefits
- Stay productive and avoid 'disability syndrome'
- Help others and recover faster



## For the Employer and/or Claim Adjuster:

- Retains a valuable employee who is experienced and trained for the work
- Provide modified duty when unable to accommodate the workers' physical restrictions on-site
- Provide consistency in return-to-work programs for occupational and non-occupational disabilities
- Improves workplace morale
- Reduces potential for workers' compensation and employment litigation
- Reduces workers' compensation and non-occupational disability claims cost, which could impact future premium rates
- Potentially reduces medical costs, encourages faster recuperation, and faster return to work for the employee

During the transitional assignment, the pre-injury employer pays a wage consistent with its Human Resources and Return-to-Work policies and in accordance with any jurisdictional requirements. In most cases, transitional duty program placement fees are paid by the insurance carrier as an expense to the workers' compensation claim, or the employer for disability claims.

Your FRR Case Manager will communicate with the non-profit agency, provide status updates, and complete all documentation for the claim file. Transitional Duty can be a complete, solutions-based approach to helping Injured Workers remain at work.

## Vocational Case Manager Spotlight

### **Brian Sappington**

This will be Brian's 14th year with FRR. With a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Frostburg State University, state and national certifications as a Case Manager, and experience succeeding with Clients having a broad range of backgrounds, skills, and obstacles, Brian is ready to provide you with excellent case management outcomes. Brian delivers on results. His specialties include: Job Placement, Labor Market Surveys, Vocational and Earning Capacity Assessments and Expert Testimony. Showing high expectations of his Clients, he enjoys making a difference in their lives by helping them to quickly transition from the workers' compensation world back to suitable, gainful employment. Brian's territory includes: Baltimore, Anne Arundel, Cecil, Harford, and Howard Counties, Northern Delaware, Southeastern Pennsylvania, and South Central Pennsylvania. Brian also enjoys a variety of outdoor activities, recently snowshoeing for the first time. He is an avid reader and loves doting on his daughters, and his dog, Franklin Waggleworth. His wife, Sara, is truly his special someone.

## Telephonic Medical Case Management

### **A Comprehensive Medical and Disability Management Program**

- Enhancing the timeliness and quality of appropriate medical care
- Early identification of obstacles
- Realization of cost savings due to facilitation of recovery and early return to work

FRR's Telephonic Case Management Program is designed to facilitate early medical care for the Injured Worker, while promoting communication among all parties: the Worker, his/her family, healthcare providers and the employer. The dedicated Telephonic Nurse Case Manager will create a plan based on the Initial Medical Interview, with measurable goals and objectives using evidence-based criteria. Our Nurse Case Manager will continually monitor progress toward these goals and communicate it with all parties. Also, the need for 'Task Assignments' or Field Case Management is continually assessed. Ultimately, a timely recovery will result in return to work including 'transitional duty' while achieving cost savings.



## Medical Case Manager Spotlight

### **Bonnie Painter**

Bonnie came to FRR in July of 2011 as a Nurse Case Manager, combined Telephonic and Field. She is a Registered Nurse with an Associate's Degree from Delaware Technical and Community College. Bonnie's background with professional offices for Orthopedic Surgeons and commercial health insurance companies, followed by performing Concurrent Case Reviews for national insurance companies allows her to relate well to Adjusters and understand their perspectives on claims. She also brings to us a specialty of nursing experience in orthopedics which makes her uniquely capable of handling many types of work-related injuries. While working in a hospital in 2010, Bonnie established a committee to research and propose a hand off communication format that was adapted as the first nursing practice policy.

Bonnie is currently pursuing certification in Pain Management. Her territory includes all of Delaware, as well as the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Outside of work, Bonnie enjoys traveling and spending time with her family.

# Pirates and Marxists: The First Injured Workers

Excerpt from 'Workers' Compensation History: The Great Tradeoff' by Christopher J Boggs, *Insurance Journal Blog*

## Arrrrgh, I'm Hurt!

Privateering (the gentlemen's term for piracy) was a dangerous occupation; taking booty away from those who did not want to give it up led to sea battles, hand-to-hand combat and injury. Prior to their assignment to the ranks of outlaws, Pirates were considered highly prized allies of the government; plundering and sharing the spoils with governors of colonies giving them a safe port.

However, because of the ever-present chance of impairment, a system was developed to compensate injured employees. There was one catch: they had to survive the wounds to collect the benefits as there was no recorded compensation for death. There were, however, set amounts of compensation per injury. For example, the loss of an eye would be worth 100 pieces of eight (Spanish dollar). Shockingly enough, these payments compare rather closely to modern compensation schedules!

In addition to being compensated, injured crew members were allowed to remain on board and offered less strenuous duty. This was the creation of the first return-to-work program.

## Marxism, Socialism and Workers' Compensation

Otto von Bismarck, the 'Iron Chancellor,' introduced 'Workers' Accident Insurance' in 1881. Phased in between 1881 and 1884, the program became the model for workers' compensation programs in Europe and ultimately America.

Bismarck was not known as a socially-conscious ruler; the working conditions of the common man were not necessarily foremost in his mind. But Bismarck's main political rivals were Marxists with socialist agendas — a feigned concern for the plight of the common man. On the top of this agenda was a workers' compensation program.

The 'Iron Chancellor' eventually outlawed Marxist and other socialist-leaning parties, securing his rule. However, he did borrow some of their ideas to keep peace among the people. Workers' Accident Insurance became the first compulsory workers' compensation program enacted in a modern, industrialized Europe.

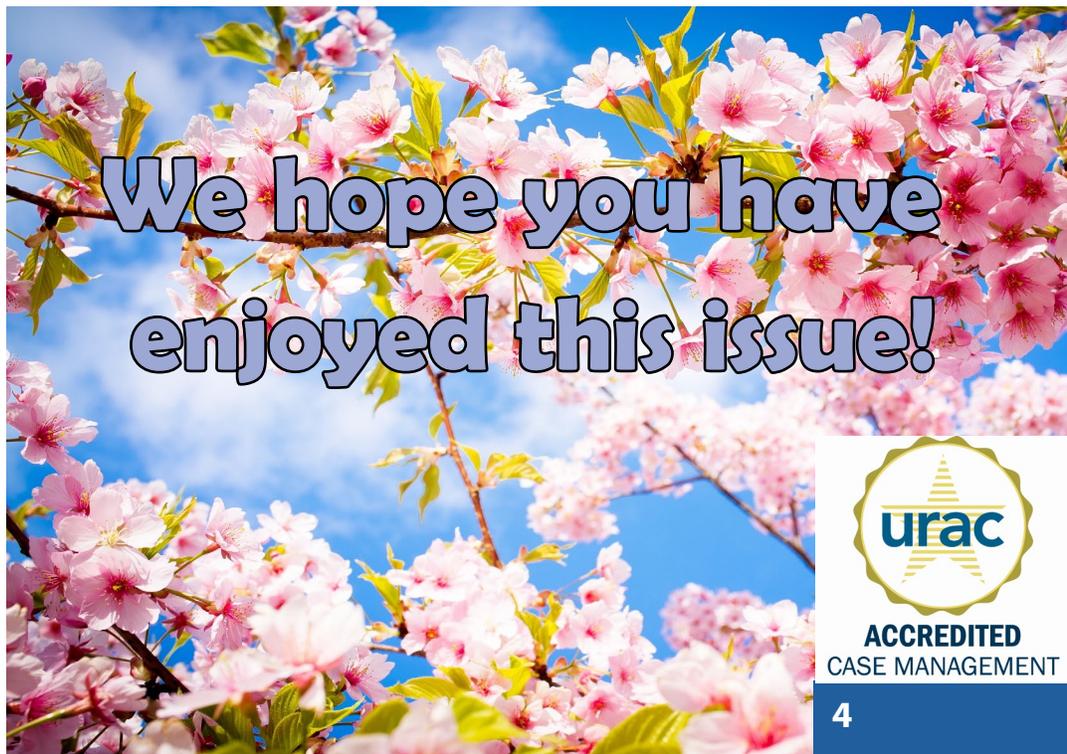
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